

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."—SHAKESPEARE.

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE WOMAN IN WHITE.

MISS HALCOMBE'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

JULY 5TH. The events of yesterday warned me to be ready, sooner or later, to meet the worst. To-day is not yet at an end; and the worst has come.

Judging by the closest calculation of time that Laura and I could make, we arrived at the conclusion that Anne Catherick must have appeared at the boat-house at half-past two o'clock, on the afternoon of yesterday. I accordingly arranged that Laura should just show herself at the luncheon table, to-day, and should then slip out at the first opportunity; leaving me behind to preserve appearances, and to follow her as soon as I could safely do so. This mode of proceeding, if no obstacles occurred to thwart us, would enable her to be at the boat-house before half-past two; and (when I left the table, in my turn) would take me to a safe position in the plantation, before three.

The change in the weather, which last night's wind warned us to expect, came with the morning. It was raining heavily, when I got up; and it continued to rain until twelve o'clock—when the clouds dispersed, the blue sky appeared, and the sun shone again with the bright promise of a fine afternoon.

My anxiety to know how Sir Percival and the Count would occupy the early part of the day, was by no means set at rest, so far as Sir Percival was concerned, by his leaving us immediately after breakfast, and going out by himself, in spite of the rain. He neither told us where he was going, nor when we might expect him back. We saw him pass the breakfast-room window, hastily, with his high boots and his waterproof coat on—and that was all.

The Count passed the morning quietly, indoors; some part of it, in the library; some part, in the drawing-room, playing odds and ends of music on the piano, and humming to himself. Judging by appearances, the sentimental side of his character was persistently inclined to betray itself still. He was silent and sensitive, and ready to sigh and languish ponderously (as only fat men *can* sigh and languish), on the smallest provocation.

Luncheon-time came; and Sir Percival did not return. The Count took his friend's place at the table—plaintively devoured the greater part of a fruit tart, submerged under a whole

jugful of cream—and explained the full merit of the achievement to us, as soon as he had done. "A taste for sweets," he said, in his softest tones and his tenderest manner, "is the innocent taste of women and children. I love to share it with them—it is another bond, dear ladies, between you and me."

Laura left the table in ten minutes' time. I was sorely tempted to accompany her. But if we had both gone out together, we must have excited suspicion; and, worse still, if we allowed Anne Catherick to see Laura accompanied by a second person who was a stranger to her, we should in all probability forfeit her confidence, from that moment, never to regain it again.

I waited, therefore, as patiently as I could, until the servant came in to clear the table. When I quitted the room, there were no signs, in the house or out of it, of Sir Percival's return. I left the Count with a piece of sugar between his lips, and the vicious cockatoo scrambling up his waistcoat to get at it; while Madame Fosco, sitting opposite to her husband, watched the proceedings of his bird and himself, as attentively as if she had never seen anything of the sort before in her life. On my way to the plantation I kept carefully beyond the range of view from the luncheon-room window. Nobody saw me and nobody followed me. It was then a quarter to three o'clock by my watch.

Once among the trees, I walked rapidly, until I had advanced more than half way through the plantation. At that point, I slackened my pace, and proceeded cautiously—but I saw no one, and heard no voices. By little and little, I came within view of the back of the boat-house—stopped and listened—then went on, till I was close behind it, and must have heard any persons who had been talking inside. Still the silence was unbroken: still, far and near, no sign of a living creature appeared anywhere.

After skirting round by the back of the building, first on one side, and then on the other, and making no discoveries, I ventured in front of it, and fairly looked in. The place was empty.

I called, "Laura!"—at first, softly—then louder and louder. No one answered, and no one appeared. For all that I could see and hear, the only human creature in the neighbourhood of the lake and the plantation, was myself.

My heart began to beat violently; but I kept my resolution, and searched, first the boat-house, and then the ground in front of it, for any signs which might show me whether Laura had really reached the place or not. No mark of her presence appeared inside the building; but I found traces of her outside it, in footprints on the sand.

I detected the footsteps of two persons—large footsteps, like a man's, and small footsteps, which, by putting my own feet into them and testing their size in that manner, I felt certain were Laura's. The ground was confusedly marked in this way, just before the boat-house. Close against one side of it, under shelter of the projecting roof, I discovered a little hole in the sand—a hole artificially made, beyond a doubt. I just noticed it, and then turned away immediately to trace the footsteps as far as I could, and to follow the direction in which they might lead me.

They led me, starting from the left-hand side of the boat-house, along the edge of the trees, a distance, I should think, of between two and three hundred yards—and then, the sandy ground showed no further trace of them. Feeling that the persons whose course I was tracking, must necessarily have entered the plantation at this point, I entered it, too. At first, I could find no path—but I discovered one, afterwards, just faintly traced among the trees; and followed it. It took me, for some distance, in the direction of the village, until I stopped at a point where another foot-track crossed it. The brambles grew thickly on either side of this second path. I stood, looking down it, uncertain which way to take next; and, while I looked, I saw on one thorny branch, some fragments of fringe from a woman's shawl. A closer examination of the fringe satisfied me that it had been torn from a shawl of Laura's; and I instantly followed the second path. It brought me out, at last, to my great relief, at the back of the house. I say to my great relief, because I inferred that Laura must, for some unknown reason, have returned before me by this roundabout way. I went in by the court-yard and the offices. The first person whom I met in crossing the servants' hall, was Mrs. Michelson, the housekeeper.

"Do you know," I asked, "whether Lady Glyde has come in from her walk or not?"

"My lady came in, a little while ago, with Sir Percival," answered the housekeeper. "I am afraid, Miss Halcombe, something very distressing has happened."

My heart sank within me. "You don't mean an accident!" I said, faintly.

"No, no—thank God, no accident. But my lady ran up-stairs to her own room in tears; and Sir Percival has ordered me to give Fanny warning to leave in an hour's time."

Fanny was Laura's maid; a good, affectionate girl who had been with her for years—the only person in the house, whose fidelity and devotion we could both depend upon.

"Where is Fanny?" I inquired.

"In my room, Miss Halcombe. The young

woman is quite overcome; and I told her to sit down, and try to recover herself."

I went to Mrs. Michelson's room, and found Fanny in a corner, with her box by her side, crying bitterly.

She could give me no explanation whatever of her sudden dismissal. Sir Percival had ordered that she should have a month's wages, in place of a month's warning, and go. No reason had been assigned; no objection had been made to her conduct. She had been forbidden to appeal to her mistress, forbidden even to see her for a moment to say good-by. She was to go without explanations or farewells—and to go at once.

After soothing the poor girl by a few friendly words, I asked where she proposed to sleep that night. She replied that she thought of going to the little inn in the village, the landlady of which was a respectable woman, known to the servants at Blackwater Park. The next morning, by leaving early, she might get back to her friends in Cumberland, without stopping in London, where she was a total stranger.

I felt directly that Fanny's departure offered us a safe means of communication with London and with Limmeridge House, of which it might be very important to avail ourselves. Accordingly, I told her that she might expect to hear from her mistress or from me in the course of the evening, and that she might depend on our both doing all that lay in our power to help her, under the trial of leaving us for the present. Those words said, I shook hands with her, and went up-stairs.

The door which led to Laura's room, was the door of an ante-chamber, opening on to the passage. When I tried it, it was bolted on the inside.

I knocked, and the door was opened by the same heavy, overgrown housemaid, whose lumpish insensibility had tried my patience so severely, on the day when I found the wounded dog. I had, since that time, discovered that her name was Margaret Porcher, and that she was the most awkward, slatternly, and obstinate servant in the house.

On opening the door, she instantly stepped out to the threshold, and stood grinning at me in stolid silence.

"Why do you stand there?" I said. "Don't you see that I want to come in?"

"Ah, but you mustn't come in," was the answer, with another and a broader grin still.

"How dare you talk to me in that way? Stand back instantly!"

She stretched out a great red hand and arm on each side of her, so as to bar the doorway, and slowly nodded her addle head at me.

"Master's orders," she said; and nodded again.

I had need of all my self-control to warn me against contesting the matter with *her*, and to remind me that the next words I had to say must be addressed to her master. I turned my back on her, and instantly went down stairs to find him. My resolution to keep my temper under all the irritations that Sir Percival could

offer, was, by this time, as completely forgotten—I say so to my shame—as if I had never made it. It did me good—after all I had suffered and suppressed in that house—it actually did me good to feel how angry I was.

The drawing-room and the breakfast-room were both empty. I went on to the library; and there I found Sir Percival, the Count, and Madame Fosco. They were all three standing up, close together, and Sir Percival had a little slip of paper in his hand. As I opened the door, I heard the Count say to him, "No—a thousand times over, No."

I walked straight up to him, and looked him full in the face.

"Am I to understand, Sir Percival, that your wife's room is a prison, and that your house-maid is the gaoler who keeps it?" I asked.

"Yes; that is what you are to understand," he answered. "Take care my gaoler hasn't got double duty to do—take care your room is not a prison, too."

"Take *you* care how you treat your wife, and how you threaten *me*," I broke out, in the heat of my anger. "There are laws in England to protect women from cruelty and outrage. If you hurt a hair of Laura's head, if you dare to interfere with my freedom, come what come may, to those laws I will appeal."

Instead of answering me, he turned round to the Count.

"What did I tell you?" he asked. "What do you say now?"

"What I said before," replied the Count—"No."

Even in the vehemence of my anger, I felt his calm, cold, grey eyes on my face. They turned away from me, as soon as he had spoken, and looked significantly at his wife. Madame Fosco immediately moved close to my side, and, in that position, addressed Sir Percival before either of us could speak again.

"Favour me with your attention, for one moment," she said, in her clear, icily-suppressed tones. "I have to thank you, Sir Percival, for your hospitality; and to decline taking advantage of it any longer. I remain in no house in which ladies are treated as your wife and Miss Halcombe have been treated here to-day?"

Sir Percival drew back a step, and stared at her in dead silence. The declaration he had just heard—a declaration which he well knew, as I well knew, Madame Fosco would not have ventured to make without her husband's permission—seemed to petrify him with surprise. The Count stood by, and looked at his wife with the most enthusiastic admiration.

"She is sublime!" he said to himself. He approached her, while he spoke, and drew her hand through his arm. "I am at your service, Eleanor," he went on, with a quiet dignity that I had never noticed in him before. "And at Miss Halcombe's service, if she will honour me by accepting all the assistance I can offer her."

"Damn it! what do you mean?" cried Sir Percival, as the Count quietly moved away, with his wife, to the door.

"At other times I mean what I say; but, at this time, I mean what my wife says," replied the impenetrable Italian. "We have changed places, Percival, for once; and Madame Fosco's opinion is—mine."

Sir Percival crumpled up the paper in his hand; and, pushing past the Count, with another oath, stood between him and the door.

"Have your own way," he said, with baffled rage in his low, half-whispering tones. "Have your own way—and see what comes of it." With those words, he left the room.

Madame Fosco glanced inquiringly at her husband. "He has gone away very suddenly," she said. "What does it mean?"

"It means that you and I together have brought the worst-tempered man in all England to his senses," answered the Count. "It means, Miss Halcombe, that Lady Glyde is relieved from a gross indignity, and you from the repetition of an unpardonable insult. Suffer me to express my admiration of your conduct and your courage at a very trying moment."

"Sincere admiration," suggested Madame Fosco.

"Sincere admiration," echoed the Count.

I had no longer the strength of my first angry resistance to outrage and injury to support me. My heart-sick anxiety to see Laura; my sense of my own helpless ignorance of what had happened at the boat-house, pressed on me with an intolerable weight. I tried to keep up appearances, by speaking to the Count and his wife in the tone which they had chosen to adopt in speaking to me. But the words failed on my lips—my breath came short and thick—my eyes looked longingly, in silence, at the door. The Count, understanding my anxiety, opened it, went out, and pulled it to after him. At the same time Sir Percival's heavy step descended the stairs. I heard them whispering together, outside, while Madame Fosco was assuring me in her calmest and most conventional manner, that she rejoiced, for all our sakes, that Sir Percival's conduct had not obliged her husband and herself to leave Blackwater Park. Before she had done speaking, the whispering ceased, the door opened, and the Count looked in.

"Miss Halcombe," he said, "I am happy to inform you that Lady Glyde is mistress again in her own house. I thought it might be more agreeable to you to hear of this change for the better from *me*, than from Sir Percival—and I have, therefore, expressly returned to mention it."

"Admirable delicacy!" said Madame Fosco, paying back her husband's tribute of admiration, with the Count's own coin, in the Count's own manner. He smiled and bowed as if he had received a formal compliment from a polite stranger, and drew back to let me pass out first.

Sir Percival was standing in the hall. As I hurried to the stairs I heard him call impatiently to the Count, to come out of the library.

"What are you waiting there for?" he said; "I want to speak to you."

"And I want to think a little by myself," replied the other. "Wait till later, Percival—wait till later."

Neither he nor his friend said any more. I gained the top of the stairs, and ran along the passage. In my haste and my agitation, I left the door of the ante-chamber open—but I closed the door of the bedroom the moment I was inside it.

Laura was sitting alone at the far end of the room; her arms resting wearily on a table, and her face hidden in her hands. She started up, with a cry of delight, when she saw me.

"How did you get here?" she asked. "Who gave you leave? Not Sir Percival?"

In my overpowering anxiety to hear what she had to tell me, I could not answer her—I could only put questions, on my side. Laura's eagerness to know what had passed down stairs proved, however, too strong to be resisted. She persistently repeated her inquiries.

"The Count, of course?" I answered, impatiently. "Whose influence in the house—?"

She stopped me, with a gesture of disgust.

"Don't speak of him," she cried. "The Count is the vilest creature breathing! The Count is a miserable Spy—!"

Before we could either of us say another word, we were alarmed by a soft knocking at the door of the bedroom.

I had not yet sat down; and I went first to see who it was. When I opened the door, Madame Fosco confronted me, with my handkerchief in her hand.

"You dropped this down stairs, Miss Halcombe," she said; "and I thought I could bring it to you, as I was passing by to my own room."

Her face, naturally pale, had turned to such a ghastly whiteness, that I started at the sight of it. Her hands, so sure and steady at all other times, trembled violently; and her eyes looked wolfishly past me through the open door, and fixed on Laura.

She had been listening before she knocked! I saw it in her white face; I saw it in her trembling hands; I saw it in her look at Laura.

After waiting an instant, she turned from me in silence, and slowly walked away.

I closed the door again. "Oh, Laura! Laura! We shall both rue the day when you spoke those words!"

"You would have spoken them yourself, Marian, if you had known what I know. Anne Catherick was right. There was a third person watching us in the plantation, yesterday; and that third person—"

"Are you sure it was the Count?"

"I am absolutely certain. He was Sir Percival's spy—he was Sir Percival's informer—he set Sir Percival watching and waiting, all the morning through, for Anne Catherick and for me."

"Is Anne found? Did you see her at the lake?"

"No. She has saved herself by keeping away from the place. When I got to the boat-house, no one was there."

"Yes? yes?"

"I went in, and sat waiting for a few minutes. But my restlessness made me get up again, to walk about a little. As I passed out, I saw some marks on the sand, close under the front of the boat-house. I stooped down to examine them, and discovered a word written in large letters, on the sand. The word was—LOOK."

"And you scraped away the sand, and dug a hollow place in it?"

"How do you know that, Marian?"

"I saw the hollow-place myself, when I followed you to the boat-house. Go on—go on!"

"Yes; I scraped away the sand on the surface; and in a little while, I came to a strip of paper hidden beneath, which had writing on it. The writing was signed with Anne Catherick's initials."

"Where is it?"

"Sir Percival has taken it from me."

"Can you remember what the writing was? Do you think you can repeat it to me?"

"In substance I can, Marian. It was very short. You would have remembered it, word for word."

"Try to tell me what the substance was, before we go any further."

She complied. I write the lines down here, exactly as she repeated them to me. They ran thus:

"I was seen with you, yesterday, by a tall stout old man, and had to run to save myself. He was not quick enough on his feet to follow me, and he lost me among the trees. I dare not risk coming back here to-day, at the same time. I write this, and hide it in the sand, at six in the morning, to tell you so. When we speak next of your wicked husband's Secret we must speak safely, or not at all. Try to have patience. I promise you shall see me again; and that soon.—A. C."

The reference to the "tall stout old man" (the terms of which Laura was certain that she had repeated to me correctly), left no doubt as to who the intruder had been. I called to mind that I had told Sir Percival, in the Count's presence, the day before, that Laura had gone to the boat-house to look for her brooch. In all probability he had followed her there, in his officious way, to relieve her mind about the matter of the signature, immediately after he had mentioned the change in Sir Percival's plans to me in the drawing-room. In this case, he could only have got to the neighbourhood of the boat-house, at the very moment when Anne Catherick discovered him. The suspiciously hurried manner in which she parted from Laura, had no doubt prompted his useless attempt to follow her. Of the conversation, which had previously taken place between them, he could have heard nothing. The distance between the house and the lake, and the time at which he left me in the drawing-room, as compared with the time at which Laura and Anne Catherick had been speaking together,

proved that fact to us, at any rate, beyond a doubt.

Having arrived at something like a conclusion, so far, my next great interest was to know what discoveries Sir Percival had made, after Count Fosco had given him his information.

"How came you to lose possession of the letter?" I asked. "What did you do with it, when you found it in the sand?"

"After reading it once through," she replied, "I took it into the boat-house with me, to sit down, and look it over second time. While I was reading, a shadow fell across the paper. I looked up; and saw Sir Percival standing in the doorway watching me."

"Did you try to hide the letter?"

"I tried—but he stopped me. 'You needn't trouble to hide that,' he said. 'I happen to have read it.' I could only look at him, helplessly—I could say nothing. 'You understand?' he went on; 'I have read it. I dug it up out of the sand two hours since, and buried it again, and wrote the word above it again, and left it ready to your hands. You can't lie yourself out of the scrape now. You saw Anne Catherick in secret yesterday; and you have got her letter in your hand at this moment. I have not caught her yet; but I have caught *you*. Give me the letter.' He stepped close up to me—I was alone with him, Marian—what could I do?—I gave him the letter."

"What did he say, when you gave it to him?"

"At first, he said nothing. He took me by the arm, and led me out of the boat-house, and looked about him, on all sides, as if he was afraid of our being seen or heard. Then, he clasped his hand fast round my arm, and whispered to me—'What did Anne Catherick say to you yesterday?—I insist on hearing every word, from first to last.'"

"Did you tell him?"

"I was alone with him, Marian—his cruel hand was bruising my arm—what could I do?"

"Is the mark on your arm still? Let me see it?"

"Why do you want to see it?"

"I want to see it, Laura, because our endurance must end, and our resistance must begin, to-day. That mark is a weapon to strike him with. Let me see it now—I may have to swear to it, at some future time."

"Oh, Marian, don't look so! don't talk so! It doesn't hurt me, now!"

"Let me see it!"

She showed me the marks. I was past grieving over them, past crying over them, past shuddering over them. They say we are either better than men, or worse. If the temptation that has fallen in some women's way, and made them worse, had fallen in mine, at that moment—Thank God! my face betrayed nothing that his wife could read. The gentle, innocent, affectionate creature thought I was frightened for her and sorry for her—and thought no more.

"Don't think too seriously of it, Marian," she said, simply, as she pulled her sleeve down again. "It doesn't hurt me, now."

"I will try to think quietly of it, my love, for your sake.—Well! well! And you told him all that Anne Catherick had said to you—all that you told me?"

"Yes; all. He insisted on it—I was alone with him—I could conceal nothing."

"Did he say anything when you had done?"

"He looked at me, and laughed to himself, in a mocking, bitter way. 'I mean to have the rest out of you,' he said; 'do you hear?—the rest.' I declared to him solemnly that I had told him everything I knew. 'Not you?' he answered; 'you know more than you choose to tell. Won't you tell it? You shall! I'll wring it out of you at home, if I can't wring it out of you, here.' He led me away by a strange path through the plantation—a path where there was no hope of our meeting *you*—and he spoke no more, till we came within sight of the house. Then he stopped again, and said, 'Will you take a second chance, if I give it to you? Will you think better of it, and tell me the rest?' I could only repeat the same words I had spoken before. He cursed my obstinacy, and went on, and took me with him to the house. 'You can't deceive me,' he said; 'you know more than you choose to tell. I'll have your secret out of you; and I'll have it out of that sister of yours, as well. There shall be no more plotting and whispering between you. Neither you nor she shall see each other again till you have confessed the truth. I'll have you watched morning, noon, and night, till you confess the truth.' He was deaf to everything I could say. He took me straight up-stairs into my own room. Fanny was sitting there, doing some work for me; and he instantly ordered her out. 'I'll take good care *you're* not mixed up in the conspiracy,' he said. 'You shall leave this house to-day. If your mistress wants a maid, she shall have one of my choosing.' He pushed me into the room, and locked the door on me—he set that senseless woman to watch me outside—Marian! he looked and spoke like a madman. You may hardly understand it—he did indeed."

"I do understand it, Laura. He is mad—mad with the terrors of a guilty conscience. Every word you have said makes me positively certain that when Anne Catherick left you yesterday, you were on the eve of discovering a secret, which might have been your vile husband's ruin—and he thinks you *have* discovered it. Nothing you can say or do, will quiet that guilty distrust, and convince his false nature of your truth. I don't say this, my love, to alarm you. I say it to open your eyes to your position, and to convince you of the urgent necessity of letting me act, as I best can, for your protection, while the chance is our own. Count Fosco's interference has secured me access to you to-day; but he may withdraw that interference to-morrow. Sir Percival has already dismissed Fanny, because she is a quick-witted girl, and devotedly attached to you; and has chosen a woman to take her place, who cares nothing for your interests, and whose dull intelligence lowers her to the level of the watch-

dog in the yard. It is impossible to say what violent measures he may take next, unless we make the most of our opportunities while we have them."

"What can we do, Marian? Oh, if we could only leave this house, never to see it again!"

"Listen to me, my love—and try to think that you are not quite helpless so long as I am here with you."

"I will think so—I do think so. Don't altogether forget poor Fanny, in thinking of me. She wants help and comfort, too."

"I will not forget her. I saw her before I came up here; and I have arranged to communicate with her to-night. Letters are not safe in the post-bag at Blackwater Park—and I shall have two to write to-day, in your interests, which must pass through no hands but Fanny's."

"What letters?"

"I mean to write first, Laura, to Mr. Gilmore's partner, who has offered to help us in any fresh emergency. Little as I know of the law, I am certain that it can protect a woman from such treatment as that ruffian has inflicted on you to-day. I will go into no details about Anne Catherick, because I have no certain information to give. But the lawyer shall know of those bruises on your arm, and of the violence offered to you in this room—he shall, before I rest to-night."

"But, think of the exposure, Marian!"

"I am calculating on the exposure. Sir Percival has more to dread from it than you have. The prospect of an exposure may bring him to terms, when nothing else will."

I rose, as I spoke; but Laura entreated me not to leave her.

"You will drive him to desperation," she said, "and increase our dangers tenfold."

I felt the truth—the disheartening truth—of those words. But I could not bring myself plainly to acknowledge it to her. In our dreadful position, there was no help and no hope for us, but in risking the worst. I said so, in guarded terms. She sighed bitterly—but did not contest the matter. She only asked about the second letter that I had proposed writing. To whom was it to be addressed?

"To Mr. Fairlie," I said. "Your uncle is your nearest male relative, and the head of the family. He must and shall interfere."

Laura shook her head sorrowfully.

"Yes, yes," I went on; "your uncle is a weak, selfish, worldly man, I know. But he is not Sir Percival Glyde; and he has no such friend about him as Count Fosco. I expect nothing from his kindness, or his tenderness of feeling towards you, or towards me. But he will do anything to pamper his own indolence, and to secure his own quiet. Let me only persuade him that his interference, at this moment, will save him inevitable trouble, and wretchedness, and responsibility hereafter, and he will bestir himself for his own sake. I know how to deal with him, Laura—I have had some practice."

"If you could only prevail on him to let me

go back to Limmeridge for a little while, and stay there quietly with you, Marian, I could be almost as happy again as I was before I was married!"

Those words set me thinking in a new direction. Would it be possible to place Sir Percival between the two alternatives of either exposing himself to the scandal of legal interference on his wife's behalf, or of allowing her to be quietly separated from him for a time, under pretext of a visit to her uncle's house? And could he, in that case, be reckoned on as likely to accept the last resource? It was doubtful—more than doubtful. And yet, hopeless as the experiment seemed, surely it was worth trying? I resolved to try it, in sheer despair of knowing what better to do.

"Your uncle shall know the wish you have just expressed," I said; "and I will ask the lawyer's advice on the subject, as well. Good may come of it—and will come of it, I hope."

Saying that, I rose again; and again Laura tried to make me resume my seat.

"Don't leave me," she said, uneasily. "My desk is on that table. You can write here."

It tried me to the quick to refuse her, even in her own interests. But we had been too long shut up alone together already. Our chance of seeing each other again might entirely depend on our not exciting any fresh suspicions. It was full time to show myself, quietly and unconcernedly, among the wretches who were, at that very moment, perhaps, thinking of us and talking of us down stairs. I explained the miserable necessity to Laura; and prevailed on her to recognise it, as I did.

"I will come back again, love, in an hour or less," I said. "The worst is over for to-day. Keep yourself quiet, and fear nothing."

"Is the key in the door, Marian? Can I lock it on the inside?"

"Yes; here is the key. Lock the door, and open it to nobody, until I come up-stairs again."

I kissed her, and left her. It was a relief to me, as I walked away, to hear the key turned in the lock, and to know that the door was at her own command.

GOOD WATER.

FROM the seas, that are the great reservoirs of pickled water warranted to keep unchanged for many thousand years, pure water rises into the warmer atmosphere as thin air. It varies the tints of the sky, contributes to the glories of the sunset and the sunrise, rolls into cloud at the touch of a chill current, and, when more thoroughly chilled, runs into raindrops and descends in life-supporting showers over the dry land. It falls as soft water, that is to say, pure water, of which an imperial gallon weighs ten pounds avoirdupois. This drink and wash for herb and beast and man, is, however, itself one of the most eager of drinkers. If there be impure gases in the air through which it falls, it will absorb them. If there be earthy or mi-

neral salts in the earth through which it soaks, it will absorb them also. Rain-water soaks through porous earths and sands, until it finds a layer, as of clay or rock, through which it cannot filter; over that, it collects and runs underground until it finds an outlet on some lower level of the surface ground, and there it will be poured out as a spring. The water of the springs trickles down hill in runlets determined by the fall of the ground, and, as these descend, the runlets join, to form, in the lowest groove of the land over which they flow, a river-bed. From the soil through which the rain-water has soaked, and from the land over which rivulets and rivers flow, the thirsty water has absorbed all that it could take up. According to the nature of the soils, therefore, will be the nature of the stream.

For domestic uses, water is said to be soft or hard, in proportion to the quantity of lime it has been able to absorb. Absolutely pure water is to be obtained only by distillation in closed vessels; but rain-water is pure water obtained by a sort of open distillation which does not guard against absorption of strange matters from the slight contamination usually present in the air. Much account, however, need not be taken of this: rain-water, before it has soaked into the ground, may be considered pure. If it fall upon granite, clay-slate, and the like formations, upon which it can lie dissolving nothing, it remains pure. A chemist or engineer fairly versed in analysis, could tell from examination of the water of a district what was its geology; or, if he knew the geology of any region, could describe its water. Regions of granite and clay slate usually are covered with moss, peat, or heath; and the soft rain-water, that is so ready to dissolve anything soluble, will give a dark tinge to streams flowing from rocks clothed with this kind of vegetation. Rain falling upon, and rivers flowing over, chalk, the oolites, the new red sandstone, and the like formations, will yield water containing lime, magnesia, iron, sulphur, and thereby made heavier, harder, and less competent to take into solution other things. The dissolving power of water is, of course, much lessened when it has already taken to itself, and has to keep a hold upon, its load of earth. The earths in the water also put a chemical charm on not a few things that come within their touch, and take away some of their readiness to be dissolved.

To a skilled traveller, the simple aspect of a river, dark and vegetable tinged, sparkling or bluish grey, should indicate much of the character of an unexplored region through which its waters may have come. A few simple tests would enable him to decide accurately upon the geology of mountain districts which he wanted time or means to traverse with his feet. Had Doctor Barth and Doctor Livingstone possessed this knowledge and a little pocket-case of chemicals, how much richer in information would have been their accounts of the streams they saw descending from the unknown lands of Africa? A practical geologist can tell of a country from a glance at the surface, nearly

as much as the skilful comparative anatomist can tell of an animal from a glance at a piece of its bone. The outward form of bird, beast, fish, or land, bears always a due relation to the nature of its skeleton. Abrupt steep mountains belong to the old crystalline strata; these are bold sea cliffs of colite and chalk, but the inland surfaces of these layers are undulated in hill, valley, and plain, and the cliffs have their own smooth, curving upper outline to be recognised even at telescopic distances.

Roughly speaking, the deeper the water sinks, the more it is impregnated with earthy matter in solution; deep well water is; therefore, usually very hard. There is a limit to the depth through which water can soak; in many water-bearing strata this is found at about nine hundred or a thousand feet. Hot springs are exceptional, for they may rise through inverted siphon veins and fissures, from a depth twice or three times as great.

It is wonderful to consider how much rock the rivers carry to the sea; nay, how much rock goes into the stomachs of the Londoners. In Thames water, and most of the waters furnishing the London supply, lime is found in the proportion of about sixteen grains to the gallon. In a million gallons exist a Ton of Lime. The daily supply is about eighty million gallons, so that thirty thousand tons of lime is about the quantity pumped into London with its year's supply of water. A mountain of lime that would make mortar enough to build a suburb!

Lime injures the coats of the stomach when we drink the water that contains it; when we wash with such water, it curdles soap, and takes away the beauty of the skin. Grooms and trainers take good care to give soft water to their horses and dogs. There are training-stables on the chalk downs, for the sake of the turf and the quiet; but large tanks are formed in which to store rain-water for the use of the horses. However far away the animals may go to their races, their soft water is sent with them and supplied to them daily. Even a change of water is avoided. One drink of hard water would put the favourite horse out of condition, make his coat "stare," and destroy his chance of being winner of the Derby.

Yet, knowing all this, we ourselves, with a curious obstinacy, stick by the hard water, drink it, and wash in it; and, to defeat our great lime enemy, let us engage the strong upon our side: ladies should know that pure soft water is the truest beauty wash, and that there is no cosmetic that will counteract the bad effect of hard water on the complexion. Her Majesty's adviser, Sir James Clarke, ordained, some years ago, the use of distilled water at the royal toilet. The hard spring water at many of our summer bathing-places on the coast between Scarborough and Torquay, is a serious drawback to the advantages of a sea holiday, where either no water must be drunk, or we must be content to drink what would almost poison a horse. But a time must come when

luxurious men will be as choice over their water as they now are over their wine, and when no invalid who can obtain the most ordinary comforts of life will ever think of pouring hard water into his stomach.

Water from granites, clay slates, and millstone grits, seldom contains more than two grains, and in some cases but half a grain, of lime to the gallon. The people of Aberdeen and Glasgow, Keswick, Whitehaven, Lancaster, and Manchester, drink water in which the admixture of lime is below four grains to the gallon. Give London something of this kind. Only let us clear about twenty thousand tons of lime out of our yearly supply, and let us use smoke-consuming fires, and the freshened complexions of London ladies will become quite as inspiring to the poets, as the cheeks of the country Chloes. It is said to be a fact that beautiful women most abound in soft-water districts. The poets always knew this. Moore, when he sings of the beauties of Cashmere, calls them, with a pleasant mixture of the lackadaisical and the practical, bright creatures of the valley, who

Drink beams

Of beauty from its founts and streams.

The clay slate valley of the Dee, the clay slate and granite lake regions of Cumberland, and the Scotch Highlands, have a standing credit for the clear-skinned maids who dwell about them. Among the Alpine oolites and limestones, we find pallid faces, wens, and cretinism. Vegetables are of one mind with animals as to the unwholesome sort of drinking water. Foxgloves grow seven feet high where they drink sweet water off clay slate; upon limestone, they seldom attain to more than half that height.

Some waters, holding carbonate of lime in solution, may be softened by boiling. This is the case with Thames water, and all water from chalk. Water, hardened by sulphate of lime, becomes yet harder by boiling, in proportion to the extent of the evaporation. Soft waters are rapid and dull to the taste of hard-water-drinkers. Animals of all kinds dislike any change of water. Sudden change may be injurious to men. Armies of hard-water-drinkers have, during a march, had many of their number prostrated by the drinking of soft water; to the great solvent power of which the stomach is unused, and it produces spasms. This does not happen because soft water is unwholesome, but because hard-water-drinking has become, as smoking may become, an established habit, difficult to break off suddenly. Liverpool people object to the peat taint on the pure surface water with which they are now supplied. Of the soft-water-drinking towns already named, Lancaster gets water, nearly pure, from millstone grit, and Keswick, from the clay slate of Skiddaw, which receives water fresh from the clouds almost of the standard softness of distilled water.

Londoners may drink good water if they first boil and then filter what is supplied to them, having set it in pure air to cool. Pure water, as before said, dissolves and absorbs eagerly

Any water in a foul cistern, or in a cistern near a dustbin, over a drain, or connected by the waste-pipe with a foul drain, must become unwholesome. The old cry of "The wells are poisoned!" in case of an epidemic, is commonly a true cry still; only the poisoning has to be laid no longer on the Jews. Lately, in Salford gaol, a peculiar sickness seized upon a number of the prisoners. The medical officer traced this to the water. A cistern, of which the waste-pipe led to the sewers, had been covered in. During hot and dry weather, the foul gases from the sewers were conveyed by the waste-pipe to the surface of the cistern, and, being retained there by the cistern lid, were absorbed in such quantity as to impregnate the whole contents very nearly up to immediate poisoning point. The connexion between bad water and cholera is known to all. So is, or so should be, the risk of poison incurred by the passage of soft water over lead. Soft water—so hungry that it will even digest stone—has, in short, to be preserved with special care, from contact with whatever is unwholesome.

A glass of spring water is an article turned out by sea, sky, and earth, and worked upon their grandest scale under the eye of the sun. The less it is of the earth earthy, the better for those who require more of it than mere eye service.

CREAM OF TARTARY.

If the reader will take the trouble to glance at a map of Russia, he will find at the southern extremity of the province Jenisseisk a district called Minussinsk. This district is fertile in stories, which we will agree to call Tartar—or Tatar, if you will—without being too nice as to the propriety of the expression. Dr. Macgowan told me the other day, in one of his lectures on Japan, that there was no such thing as a Tartar, and if he meant that a number of races, each with a proper appellation of its own, have been classified with no rhyme and little reason under the common name of Tartar, I perfectly agree with him. But I think we shall express ourselves more accurately if we say that there was formerly a section of the Mongols to whom the word Tartar properly belonged, and that consequently there was once a real Tartar whose name has been hastily bestowed upon his most distant relations.

From the spot to which we refer, the indefatigable philologist, Alexander Castrén, brought several local stories; and the collection thus formed has since been increased by W. Titow, the agent of the Imperial Geographical Society of Russia. To Western Europe the knowledge attained by these investigations into the varieties of the Altaic family is communicated through the medium of Anton Schieffner, who, in the most loving and reverential spirit, translates all the works of the admirable Castrén into German, and is himself an ardent philologist. Now, in the course of last year, Anton Schieffner published a collection of the Tartar tales discovered

by Castrén and Titow, beautifying them with the metre which is used by Professor Longfellow in his *Hiawatha*, and which is, in fact, the national metre of the Finns, to whom all Tartars, proper and improper, are related, as members of the great Altaic family. He was justified in adopting the metrical form, by the fact that these stories are actually sung by Tartar bards, whose functions strongly resemble those of the Greek rhapsodists.

In presenting one of the stories to the English public, I not only undo the metrical work of Anton Schieffner, but, by clipping off poetical exuberances, greatly reduce the length of the tale without passing over a single incident of importance. If the reader, however, be fanciful, and would make his fancy correspond to reality, he will imagine the story sung by a performer seated on the skin of some beast, and accompanying himself with the sound of an instrument scantily provided with strings.

The noted hero Alten Chan (Gold Prince), who lived at the foot of the White Mountain, on the coast of the White Sea, rose early one fine morning, and put on his mighty armour. When his wife, Alten Areg (Pure Gold), asked him the reason of this extraordinary activity, he replied that he was about to count his subjects and his vast herds of cattle; and, indeed, he expended the whole day in this important operation, kindly bestowing horses and clothes on all the persons who lacked the necessary articles of Tartar existence. The survey proved perfectly satisfactory, and when he returned home at night he was in such a cheerful mood that he ate and drank all the refreshments which his excellent wife set before him: partaking of them so freely that he became not a little inebriated. Nevertheless, his heart was not free from trouble, for he was alike destitute of children and collateral relations; and when his potations had rendered him somewhat maudlin, he began to bewail a state of things which would end in the transfer of his jurte (hut) and all his property to some stranger with whom he could feel no natural sympathy. After a bad day's sport on the following day, he was returning sulkily home, when, in the midst of his flocks, he saw a boy who, though only three years of age, was a wonderful personage, inasmuch as the fire from his eyes lighted up the clouds above his head, and the earth around him, with a ruddy glow. So much was Alten Chan displeased by this apparition, that he returned to his jurte in a very ill humour, and would neither drink his wine nor taste a morsel of food. Poor Alten Areg, deeply distressed, thought that perhaps one of his horses had received a hurt, or that the cut of one of his garments was not according to his taste; but she was speedily informed that he had found a strange boy, about whom he entertained such uneasy suspicions that he intended to render him harmless by hacking him to pieces. The tender-hearted dame did not at all approve of this project, as she surmised that the child might possibly have been sent by Kudai (the

Tartar deity) as a compensation for their want of natural heirs. Instead of attending to her supplications, Alten Chan snatched up his golden sword, and, walking out of his jurte, ordered nine of his heroes to bring the suspicious boy before him without the slightest delay. This command was executed with all promptness, and soon the child was laid across a broad block of stone, and Alten Chan was lifting up his steel sword for the purpose of striking off his head. This horrible spectacle so deeply moved the heart of Alten Areg, that she begged to be slain instead of the child, or, if that request could not be granted, to be killed at the same time; but the stern Alten Chan gave her no answer beyond a severe flogging, which lasted several hours, and left her (as well it might) completely exhausted. Being thus secure, as he fondly imagined, from all interruption, good Alten Chan dealt a smart blow at the nape of the boy's neck; but, behold! the sword would not cut, and an attempt to pierce the child with a spear proved equally abortive. He now resolved to try the effect of an arrow, and, riding on his whity-blue steed to the top of the lofty mountain, while his docile heroes below held the boy in a good target-like position, he drew his bow with such force that the horse sank, stirrup-deep, into the ground—at which fact we cease to wonder when we are informed that the pull lasted from early morning till late in the evening. However, strong and long as the pull was, this method was no more effective than the others, for the arrow rebounded back from the boy's chest as if it had struck against a rock, and Alten Chan, terribly frightened, scampered back towards his jurte as fast as his legs could carry him.

The extremely Hard Boy, extricating himself, at last, from the hands of the nine heroes, shouted a few words of explanation after the terrified Alten Chan, informing him that he (the Hard Boy) was the gift of Kudai, and warning him that, in consequence of his cruel behaviour, forty horrible Swan Women from the seventeenth stratum of the earth, accompanied by their ally Katai Alep, from the ninth stratum, would all attack him on the following morning, and that he (the boy) intended quietly to look on, while these numerous foes cut the inhospitable Chan to pieces. Having uttered this disagreeable prediction, the Hard Boy melted away like lead, and sank into the earth.

Here was fresh cause of alarm for Alten Chan, and when he re-entered his jurte, his respect for his wife, Alten Areg, had so far increased, that he began to ask her opinion about the Hard Boy's predictions, and graciously tasted the refreshments which that forgiving female set before him as usual.

The dreaded morning came, and brought with it the mighty Katai Alep, who came riding on his chesnut horse, and was followed by the eldest of the Swan Women. Alten Chan sprang upon his whity-blue steed, and, at the first encounter, dealt Katai Alep such a blow on the cheek that he felled him to the ground; but

Katai Alep was soon on his feet again, and now commenced a wrestling match between the two heroes which lasted for nine days, without so much as a pause on either side for breath.

All this time, the Hard Boy, transformed into dust, lay upon the mountain-top, while the Swan Woman sat comfortably on his pulverised remains. However, he was not forgotten by Alten Chan, who swore that if the ill-used innocent could be restored to him he would gladly give all his herds, and all his subjects into the bargain, to the mighty Katai Alep. To such good purpose, indeed, did Alten Chan swear, that the Hard Boy reappeared, in all his integrity, to the no small surprise of the Swan Woman, who wondered whence in the world he had come.

The Hard Boy made short work with Katai Alep, seizing him by the waist, and dashing him against the ground with such violence that he smashed him, in the most extreme sense of the word, for neither a scrap of Katai Alep's flesh, nor a drop of his blood, was discernible. He next flew at the Swan Woman, but before a combat took place a written mandate dropped from the skies, prescribing a three days' truce, as the earth was not at present strong enough to endure an encounter between two such stupendous adversaries.

Nor was the precaution needless; for when, after the expiration of three days, the combat did begin, mountains were overthrown, the sea was shaken as by a storm, Kudai trembled in heaven, and Aina (the demon) quaked in the lower regions, through the violence of the shock. For nine years—not days, mind—did the Hard Boy and the Swan Woman wrestle with each other, when at last the earth fairly gave way beneath them, and down they both tumbled into the seventeenth stratum, the abode of the muscular lady: who now began to drag her adversary towards a den in a huge thick rock, the top of which reached to the earth's surface. After another year's struggle, the Hard Boy grew dizzy, and was lodged in the rock by his adversary, who loaded him with heavy chains, while a rock of copper shot up in the midst of the prison. To this the boy clung, till he seemed absorbed into its substance.

The Swan Woman, active as ever, whetted her sword anew, and administered several severe blows to herself, by way of a stimulant to fresh exertions. Thus prepared, she hastened to the district of Alten Chan. Her object was to find a certain whity-blue foal, which, however, was not to be seen among the Chan's numerous horses. She accordingly leaped over three mountains, and at the foot of a little hill perceived the foot-marks of the foal. Now, commenced a sharp pursuit, in which the Swan Woman was joined by her friend Katendjula (a gentleman of the Katai Alep kind), who rode a blackish-brown horse, but who, as his speed did not nearly approach that of the foal, proved but an inefficient ally. The Swan Woman was forced, therefore, to rely on her own agility, and soon the foal was actually in sight, and would have fallen into her hands had it not piously uttered

a prayer to Kudai, who sent down a thick mist, which rendered further pursuit impossible. For seven days did the evil demon wander about in the unseasonable fog, while Katendjula was groping his way at a considerable distance behind.

By the time that the Swan Woman had made a clear passage, by opening her mouth and gulping down the mist—an operation which lasted three days—the foal had betaken itself to the jurte of Alten Irgäk (Golden Thumb): a worthy chief, who lived in a state of single-blessedness, and was famed for his kindness towards the poor. To visit him was no easy matter, as the road was impeded by a white mountain, which was so high that even the strongest birds were tired out before they could reach the top of it. A single leap, however, sufficed to bring the foal to its summit, and the animal was greatly pleased when, at the foot of the mountain on the other side, it perceived a village extending along the border of the White Sea, and plainly discovered the jurte of Alten Irgäk, with the proper golden post in front, to which a whity-blue horse was attached.

Hastening down to the jurte, and still continuing its flight, the foal, as it passed, contrived to dart a glance at the horse, who, setting up a loud neigh, woke Alten Irgäk out of a deep slumber. This excellent person, coming out of his jurte, could not see anything but the fleeing foal in the distance; but this was enough to show him that there was something wrong, for, as he sagely observed, "the foal was a good foal, and had never harmed anybody." Mounting his horse, and approaching the white peak, he now saw Katendjula, at whom he took so true an aim that he killed both him and his horse with a single arrow. He next encountered the Swan Woman, who was not to be hit at a distance, but at once engaged in a wrestling match which lasted some days, and resulted in the death of Alten Irgäk. Ripping up the bosom of the deceased, and drinking a considerable quantity of his blood, the old lady felt so refreshed and comfortable, that she declared she was prepared, if requisite, to run for forty years.

The foal, in the mean while, had sought the assistance of Kara Mös, the greatest of living heroes, communicating with him, according to the principles of Tartar etiquette, through the medium of the grey horse that was fastened to the golden post in front of the jurte. Kara Mös, who was amusing himself with his harp, came out at the summons of his steed, and at once perceived that the foal was the foal of virtuous repute, and that the boy he carried—

[“Stop a moment,” says the careful reader, “we did not hear that the foal carried any one. Are we to suppose that the Hard Boy has been riding all this time on the animal's back?” Suppose as thou wilt, good reader, and if thou findest a gap, fill it up according to thine own fancy. I merely tell the tale as it is given me, and undertake no repairs.]

—And that the boy he carried, was the

adopted son of Alten Chan. Mounting his grey horse, he galloped up to the Swan Woman, whom he belaboured, first with his whip, afterwards with his sword, but ultimately both he and his steed were slain by the reinvigorated lady.

Through his enormous journeys, the foal, who left Kara Mōs and the Swan Woman fighting, had at length reached the extreme edge of the earth, just where it joins the sky. Direct progress being impossible, it followed the course of the sun, which soon brought it back to the spot whence it had first started. A sea of fire was now before it, and in the midst of the sea a small island, to which it at once proceeded, and setting the boy safely on the ground, changed itself into a girl, with long, luxuriant tresses.

Tough as she was, the Swan Woman could not stand fire so well as the foal, and therefore, when, after despatching Kara Mōs, she came to the fiery sea, and, pulling off one of her boots, tried with her toe the nature of the liquid, the inquisitive member was at once burned off. The island was clearly not to be reached either by swimming or fording, but the enterprising dame perceived a convenient rock midway between the coast and the island. Upon this she leaped, and when she had espied the long-haired girl with the boy in her arms, another leap took her into the island without moment's delay.

The girl—that is to say, the foal—had now no other resource but to change into a pike, and to take the Hard Boy in her mouth to the bottom of the sea, where she converted him into white sand. As for herself, she took the form of a golden duck, and swam quietly about upon the fiery surface.

After searching the island for a long time to no purpose, and burning off the tip of her little finger by a new experiment on the nature of the burning fluid, the Swan Woman burst into tears, and returned to the earth with a flying leap.

When she was fairly out of the way, the golden duck—that is, the long-haired girl, that is, the foal—fished the boy out of his hiding-place, and they both lived so well upon roast birds, that, at the end of a year, the foal had grown into a strong courser, and the boy into a sturdy man.

On the last night of the year the boy slept quietly, and when morning broke he stepped out of his jurte, when behold! there was the whit-blue steed, with a mane of gold, accoutred in the most costly fashion. The saddle-bow had been inscribed by Kudai with the name Aidōlei (full moon), and this, therefore, was the name that the young hero was destined to bear.

Aidōlei commenced his new career with becoming piety. On quitting the fiery sea, he thanked it for delivering him from the Swan Woman, and he likewise offered his devotions to the sun, the moon, and Kudai. So swift was his courser, that its hoofs never touched the grass, but it ordered him to stop at a black rock, which burst in pieces and liberated the boy of three

years, whose voice, calling on the Swan Woman, was heard by Aidōlei.

[“But I thought the boy of three years was himself Aidōlei?” I dare say you did, dear reader, and so did I. But let us go on, for it is hard work, this telling of Tartar tales.]

The energies of Aidōlei were next employed in the chase of a certain black fox, who, as his horse informed him, was Ojendje Kara (the sportive black), the youngest of the forty Swan Women. The steed was so swift, that it outstripped the fox by a day's journey, and the hunter was forced to wait for the arrival of his intended victim, who at last slipped into a black rock, just as the horse was about to snap him up with its teeth. Availing himself, however, of a weighty copper staff that came conveniently to hand, Aidōlei brcke open the door of the black rock, and was heedlessly about to enter, without consulting his horse, when the wise beast informed him, not without a mild reproof, that he would first encounter two eagles, that another door would bring him to two lions, a third to a brace of black bears, and a fourth to a company of thirty damsels, to whom he must not speak a word, and whom he most certainly must not take by the hand. Yes, reader, strange as it may appear, *thirty, not forty*.

Aidōlei entered the rock on foot, and found that his sagacious horse had been perfectly right with respect to the eagles, the lions, and the bears, who all shrank timidly as he approached; but, notwithstanding this proof of his horse's wisdom, he so far forgot himself as to shake hands with the thirty girls all round—yea, in spite of the renewed admonitions of the horse, who poked his nose through the door to repeat his warnings.

Through that unlucky solution the thirty damsels were at once conglomerated into one, and the one almost as speedily became a wolf, which at once flew at Aidōlei's steed. The rock had vanished, the hero was ignobly seated on the ground in the midst of a broad plain, and the horse, to escape the wolf, leaped into a hole which took him to the seventh stratum of the earth. There, he found the boy of three years old, and invited him to mount, but the boy pointed to the wolf, and expressed his strong suspicions that this must be the crafty Ojendje Kara. He then seized the wolf by the tail, and lashed it till it had resumed the shape of a Swan Woman; and now began a wrestling-match which lasted seven years, and ended in the death of the Swan Woman, or, rather, of the whole family of Swan Women, for it will be remembered they were all conglomerated in the form of Ojendje Kara.

The boy having furnished the horse with a handsome saddle and bridle, was mounted on his back, and went in search of Aidōlei. On his way he was met by another horse, likewise of a whit-blue colour, who greeted him as his owner, and bore a saddle inscribed by Kudai with the name Ai Mirgān. This, therefore, was to be the name of the boy, who, quitting Aidōlei's horse, sprang upon the steed awarded

to him by Kudai, and rode on till he came to Aidôlei, whom he found still seated on the ground without ability to rise; this being the result of his ill-advised politeness towards the thirty damsels.

Ai Mirgân was informed by Aidôlei's horse that nothing short of the sacrifice of nine heroes would bring the seated hero to his feet. The remedy was not hard to find, for Ai Mirgân at once fetched the required quantity of heroes from the land formerly ruled by Katendjula, deceased, and killed them offhand. Aidôlei (now an upright man) and Ai Mirgân exchanged vows of eternal friendship, but were soon assaulted by two new enemies, the son of Katendjula and the son of the Swan Woman, who were sworn allies, and had inherited all the hatred of their parents towards Aidôlei. After a short scuffle of three years the two intruders were both killed: Katendjula fils by Aidôlei, and Swan fils by Ai Mirgân.

When the fight was over, they observed that Aidôlei's horse looked very pensive, and on asking that intelligent quadruped what was the matter, they were informed that Aidôlei would be turned to stone, and the steed into the bargain, if he did not take unto himself a wife on that very day. The lady he was bound to marry was named Ai Areg (moon pure), and she lived in a golden room situated between heaven and earth, and totally unprovided with steps. Indeed, so very unapproachable did the lady appear, according to the horse's account, that Aidôlei declared his willingness to be petrified, rather than to undertake an adventure so obviously hopeless. However, the good horse would hear of nothing of the kind, but took the hero on his back to the door of the golden room, having first instructed him as to the manner of wooing.

The courtship of Ai Areg took the form of a wager. She treated the hero very hospitably, and then proposed a game of hide-and-seek. If Aidôlei was caught, he was to forfeit his horse to Ai Areg; if Ai Areg was caught, she was to become the bride of Aidôlei. On hearing this arrangement, the horse wept bitterly—indeed, much more bitterly than became him, for he knew beforehand all that was to happen, and had communicated his knowledge to Aidôlei. Resolved to prevent the lady's challenge from being accepted, he shouted out that Ai Mirgân was in danger, which, inasmuch as friendship among Tartars is infinitely stronger than love, sufficed to bring Aidôlei out of the golden room. Off he galloped on the back of his wise steed, and as Ai Areg would not be deserted, she followed him in the form of a swallow. When they came to Ai Mirgân, they found him well and exceedingly merry, and at once celebrated their wedding by a festival, which lasted nine days. The sage and faithful horses, released from saddle and bridle, were rewarded by a life of freedom on the plain.

On the earth and under heaven,
There was never one who ventured

To attack those doughty heroes
Whom Kudai himself created.

The above story, which seems at first sight a mere reckless combination of incongruities, is built, strange to say, upon a system of mythology as complete in itself as that of Ancient Greece. Of this I proceed to give a brief sketch, as I do not believe there is any account of it in the English tongue.

The heroes who figure in the tale, and in fourteen others which now lie before me, are heroes in the Greek sense of the word: that is to say, they belong to a peculiar genus that stands midway between gods and men, and are, therefore, comparable to Hercules and the other monster-killing celebrities of classical antiquity. They generally live on the sea-coast, at the foot of a lofty mountain; and their jurte, or hut, which is usually made of elk-skins, sometimes beams with ornaments of precious metal. A golden post, to which the hero's steed is attached, is an indispensable article, and the hero's wealth, in addition to vast flocks of horses, sheep, and cattle, consists for the most part of costly habiliments, which are safely kept in the jurte.

In his earliest childhood the hero begins his glorious career, and if he does not distinguish himself before he is nine years old, his case is apparently hopeless. When he has come to maturity, he is provided with his steed, which usually bears his name on its saddle; though sometimes heroes have named themselves. His chief occupation, in the piping times of peace, is hunting, and a model hero will always distribute the best portion of his prey among his subjects. When in-doors, he lies on a golden couch, putting feathers upon the shafts of his arrows, or playing on a harp which is fitted with forty or sixty strings.

The hero, by virtue of his calling, is bound to measure his strength with other heroes, and the duels are fought, first with the sword, then with the spear, afterwards with bow and arrow. If these weapons leave the contest still undecided, a wrestling match takes place, which almost always ends fatally—as it is an article of faith that only one peerless hero can exist at the same time. The defeated combatant is so utterly demolished by his adversary, that nothing is left for dogs or birds to devour, and, in cases of extraordinary animosity, the victor cuts the flesh from the conquered foe, and forces him to swallow it.

The hero is also bound to obtain the hand of a lovely virgin, who is generally destined for him by the higher powers, and who is not to be won save by the performance of hard tasks that may remind some readers of the story of Atalanta. When the lady becomes a bride, her hair is put into two plaits, and the wedding is celebrated with great magnificence and with an enormous consumption of airan and kumys—the intoxicating liquors respectively made from the milk of mares and cows.

Intellectually, the hero's wife is generally his

superior, and she is his most sagacious adviser when danger is impending; but her counsel is often slighted, and not unfrequently rewarded with the lash. She rarely mounts a horse, but often possesses a dress with eagle's wings, with which she is able to fly. Still more important is the hero's horse, who is not only swift to the most fabulous degree, and capable of enduring any amount of privation, but talks with a human voice, prophesies future wants, and takes care of the hero's children if they are bereaved of their parent. To the variety of colour that may be found in the equine species, there is apparently no limit whatever.

The gods, or Kudais, of this strange system were originally seven or nine in number, and the mention of one sole Kudai, as in the preceding story, may be ascribed to a Christian influence. They reside in a celestial jure, and so far resemble the Scandinavian deities, that they contemplate with terror the approaching end of all things. Moreover, they are constantly annoyed by the seven Ainas, or demons, with whom are allied the Swan Women, who live in the lowest (the seventeenth) stratum of the earth, and who, forty in number, can conglomerate themselves at pleasure into one. The rulers of the lower world are the nine Irle Chans, who keep in their employ forty smiths,—not improbably, relations of the Cyclops of the Greeks. There are many other infernal beings of monstrous form, whom we, for the present, pass over, but we may mention that death does not necessarily terminate a hero's career, inasmuch as a return from the lower regions is by no means an impossibility.

But the most remarkable feature of the system is the reckless liberality with which the power of self-metamorphosis is conferred, not only upon demons, but upon women and horses. All seem able to turn themselves at pleasure into whatever shape they please without let or hindrance, and we feel that we are in a region where every one is a potent magician.

THE CAGED LARK.

"In vain! Thy sunny fields are far away,
And those blue vaults that echoed to thy lay
For ever closed from thee;
In vain—since never more the lightsome air
Upon its chartered breath thy wings shall bear—
Thy struggle to be free!"

"Thou whose wide reign was o'er the flowers unblown,
Thy realm is now a span, and all thy throne
One hillock of green mould!
Not thine that kindly earth where sheltered lay
Thy tender fledglings from the eye of day,
Soft in its grassy fold.

"Shut out from heaven, confined to duties low,
Tossed by a restless spirit to and fro,
Like thee our wings we beat;
Our hopes, like thine, in fickle skies are shrined;
Or, turn we to this earth, like thee we find
Life's greenest spot a cheat!"

Thus spake I, troubled. 'Twas an impious thought,
Born of sick musing, and a mind o'erwrought:

True wisdom lieth deeper;
Nor bolts nor bars, nor power of human wrong,
Turning life's music to a captive song,
Can be the great soul's keeper.

Away, away to purer fields it flies,
Where tells no blossom, while it bleeding dies,
Of battle's cruel story;
Where life's true heroes, waking from their rest,
Shall view this earth, as suns the reddened West,
From whence they passed in glory.

The weary strife, the beating of the bars,
The torn limbs trailing 'neath the triumph-cars,
The mockery and the moan,
What boots it all to him whose path lies where
Some conquering day his soul shall mount the air
Up to a golden throne?

BEDSIDE EXPERIMENTS.

NURSING is a faculty, not a science. It is a gift, not an acquirement. There are some worthy, tender-hearted, highly estimable people, who can never make decent nurses. You love them, you are charmed with them in society; you wish them all imaginable prosperity, but would as soon think of introducing a French horn and a dancing bear round about your sick-bed, as of surrendering yourself to their best intentions. Let such people read every manual ever printed, let them walk the hospitals day and night, and they would be no better for the experience. Nature forgot the pinch of kaolin which makes good nursing when she mixed up the clay out of which they were formed; and art cannot always bolster up that which nature has left imperfect. Not that I would undervalue the scientific teaching of nursing. Given improvable conditions, it helps towards perfection in the art; and that means one of the ineffable, inexhaustible, immeasurable blessings of humanity. But nothing comes out of nothing; and if nature laid no foundation, how can art, or science, or anything else, build up a superstructure? Pyramids are not raised from the point downwards.

Doctors themselves are not of more importance than nurses. A nurse can, at any time, make or ruin a doctor's success by her intelligence or stupidity; and yet we let ourselves be messed about by all sorts of incapable nurses, as if guinea fees and vile draughts constituted the whole mystery of healing. There are various kinds of nurses, of course, as there are various kinds of sheep, of wolves, and of angels; and I dare say we have all experienced one or other of the varieties in our lifetime, sometimes to our comfort and languid joy, sometimes to our weariness and sick despair. But of all kinds, the most trying are the non-professional family, or related nurses.

First of these, is the good-natured, unscientific nurse, whose shibboleth is feeding, and who thinks that nothing can go well where there is not cheerful conversation and a busy

kitchen. Such a nurse I have known to insist on a patient with the yellow jaundice taking a rich, thick, chrome-coloured custard, as the best restorative for the disorganised system. Such a nurse will open the curtains, draw up the blinds, and throw wide the windows when a German band or a Punch's show is playing underneath, to relieve the tedium of a patient groaning and flushing under congestion of the brain ; such a nurse has, before now, pressed wine and brandy on a patient in the agonies of internal inflammation ; and has engaged him in a lively chat, as the finest remedy for a nervous headache. This is the nurse who despises doctors, and puts her trust in old women and the butcher ; who shudders at grey-powder and prefers herb tea ; who always thinks you are being brought too low, even when your pulse is mad with fever. This nurse is the dearest creature in the world for the drawing-room days of life. Round, bright-eyed, cheery, voluble, warm-hearted, she is the delight of the house, and the jolliest companion in the world : but I pray that none but my critics or my enemies may ever know her when she is under the belief that she is nursing to perfection. She is, herself, blessed with a large volume of life and a strong nervous organisation, with big lungs, a big heart, and a big, but coarsely-textured brain. She is a treasure to the healthy world : I cannot repeat this too often ; for I really love her, such a fine noble domestic elephant as it is ! But, bright-eyed treasure, stay down in the drawing-room, or rampage about the hay-field, and, when I am ill, never put so much as the tip of that beloved blunt nose inside the lintel of my door !

And take your sister with you : your sister is a Muff, and Muffs are as objectionable as elephants, when the knocker is tied up. Muff, too, is a precious creature for the healthy hours ; a tender, clinging, loving soul, full of sensibility and kindness : an universal favourite, who, every one declares, must make one of the best of nurses. Try her, my friend ; try her for one week, and surely at the end of it you will give up the ghost—or her. Muff's theory of nursing is comprised in incessant personal attention, and incessant personal caresses. When you are fainting for air, Muff will hang over you, between you and the window, stifling you with her soft warm hands upon your forehead. Muff is always praising your patience, your firmness, your gentleness ; exaggerating your sufferings to your face, and making a far mightier fuss about every little occurrence, than even you think, with all your sick selfishness, is warranted by the circumstances. It would take a strong man to live through a month of Muff's bedside practice. She is rarely still, though I am bound to say she is creepy gentleness itself, and does everything in whispers. She softly tells you that your head is too low when it is rather too high, and she drags in another pillow, which she pushes and pats under you in the most irritating manner ; or, just as you have found

out a comfortable corner in the bolster, which you have pulled shockingly awry and feebly manipulated into symmetry with your person, Muff tenderly insists that it is uncomfortable, kisses you lovingly, drags up your head, and pushes back the bolster to its mathematical precision of place. She whispers in your ear till she sends you mad ; and pets you till you would beat her, if she were anybody else, and you were strong enough. "Poor fellow !" whispers Muff—you are half asleep, in a quiet doze, and in a wonderfully easy position, for her patient—"poor fellow, it is getting time for your nasty medicine ; so don't go to sleep, there's a dear." It wants twenty minutes of the time, and you have not really slept for weeks : but you were just then so tranquil and so comfortable ! Muff would be bitterly hurt if told that she is worse than useless in a sick-room. Indeed, it is the most aggravating circumstance in her case, that you love her with all your heart, and, to complain (one of the invalid's greatest comforts), would be almost next to murdering her.

Then there is the conscientious nurse, hard and practical : the blind machine which goes on turning its own handle according to the tune set for it by the doctor. Grimbones cannot judge for herself. She can obey orders, can Grimbones, and act faithfully, and with punctuality and precision ; but she has no originality and must work according to the pattern of a master. If the doctor says that certain medicines—sleeping draughts, for instance—are to be given every three hours, and forgets to add "until they take effect," Grimbones, ruthless as death, sits gauntly staring at the clock, and wakes you up at that exact minute your draught is due, although you were in a sweet and dreamless sleep, which was the very effect the medicine was intended to produce. But Grimbones has always held that obedience is the cardinal virtue. There are moral pedantries in nursing as well as anything else. Grimbones is a family pedant ; almost invariably with square shoulders, a flat back, and bony hands, who dresses in black made skimp and tight, and usually loves a merino neck-shawl pinned primly to her waist, and a half-mourning—always looking like a half-dirty—eap. Grimbones is a good woman, but an awful nurse ; a gaunt being to hover round a sick man's helpless bed. She is usually your mother-in-law. Therefore give Grimbones the keys of the storeroom and the wine-cellars, with perfect confidence ; give her also dominion over your servants ; but tell her gratefully, kindly (for Mercy's sake don't affront her !), that you would much rather she would not nurse you.

Escape, if you can, from the watching nurse, whose eye is never off you, who won't let you turn or lift your arm, or your leg, or even wink, without her interference ; who bores you every five minutes by asking "what you would like now?" who can never let well alone, and has the profoundest contempt for the healing powers of nature ; who thinks that constitutions are

babies, and have to be lifted on their legs every second, as they can never get up of themselves.

I think I prefer her, and even Grimbones and Muff, to Aunt Grewsome. When that little grey woman hears that any of her family is ill, she starts by express train from any remote part of the country to take possession of them, as if they were an estate. Oh, those small, cold, stone-coloured eyes ; those chiselled, crisp curls ; those thin, tight lips ; that long, lined, granite-coloured countenance ! The sensation of her—for she is less a human being in a house, than a subtle influence—is that skin-creeping which children call goose-flesh. Not only you, but your wife and your children, and your man-servant and your maid-servant, and even the stranger that is within your gates, succumb to her iron will. Everybody obeys her sharp, short directions—snapped off in broken sentences by her teeth—as if subject to a spell. Only one will, one opinion, is allowed to peep out from the screen of timid obedience behind which everybody cowers. Nobody must know anything but Aunt Grewsome ; but, alas, of domestic affairs, few know so much. This may be the source and secret of her mysterious power ; which she does not owe to graces of person or manner. She is so short and so active (active in a measured, angular way) that she never seems to sit down ; the most she can do is to lean her little person against the edge of a seat. Then comes the terrible moment for housemaids. Then it is that Aunt Grewsome darts cutting glances into the corners of rooms and under sofas and beds. Then it is that you, helpless and forlorn, feel that the management of the banished wife of your bosom is being impugned, and your whole establishment mercilessly criticised. Then it is that all hope is shut out ; for you know that, in whatever opinion or objection Aunt Grewsome may advance, there lurks the dreadful probability that she is in the right. It gives me, however, inexpressible pleasure to state that this very merit of hers has been her ruin. Since she read Miss Nightingale's book, and found all her own nursing doctrines confirmed in it, she has become—the foundation of her character being conceit—utterly unbearable ; and a hunting cousin of ours, who had broken his collar-bone, actually suborned one of his outdoor servants (no in-door menial would have dared) to do something so indescribably insubordinate, that she left the house, and has never ventured uninvited into any of our sick-rooms since. I dare say Aunt Grewsome is not wholly unknown to some of my readers.

But last and best of all, there is the dear fairy nurse, who is never in the way at the wrong time, and never out of the way at the right time ; who, when you wish for her, appears like magic by your side, and, when you want anything else, brings that very thing, by some marvellous intuition, from some unexplained source ; who is always cheerful and never tired ; who seems fresher after sitting up for two or three nights, than the rest of the household after

seven hours' bed ; who, when you can sit up, achieves worlds of ease and comfort with pillows, and bits of board, and cozy footstools ; who tells you exactly what you ought to know, and won't let you be bothered with any news that might worry you ; whose sympathy, though tender, is invigorating, for she never "poor-fellows!" you, as Muff does a hundred times a day ; who does your work for you in a quiet, unostentatious way, and contrives to let you have the impression that it did itself, like the tangled wool or golden web of fairy tales ; who makes jellies which no confectioner could approach, and mulls claret as if she had been taught the process by a special secret. This fairy nurse, this ideal of a sick-bed guardian, this exquisite undertaking of nature, reconciles you to nursing womanhood in general, and makes you once more believe in the good gifts of femininity. I know such a nurse ; with heart, head, and senses in unfailing harmony. Under her delightful ministrations, it is almost a pleasure to be ill. Such a nurse is like the poet, "born, not made." But even she may be benefited by scientific rules. Indeed, she is almost the only kind of nurse who can be so benefited ; for all the rest only add a little scientific pedantry to their other qualifications or disqualifications for their work.

The most sensible book ever written on the subject is Miss Nightingale's Notes on Nursing. Her rule of rules, the one which stands as the first commandment on which hang all the rest, is "TO KEEP THE AIR THE PATIENT BREATHES AS PURE AS THE EXTERNAL AIR, WITHOUT CHILLING HIM." No airing of a sick-room by means of inside windows, or doors opening into corridors, passages, halls, courts, or any other enclosed space. The outside air, and when it blows freshest and freest, is all that she will admit. With that commandment firmly established, next comes the need of some special and additional external warmth in the chilly hours of early morning, when the patient's vital powers are low, and before the food and warmth of the day have roused him up, either to healthy action or to feverish heat ; and at all times—morning, noon, and night alike—in weak, protracted, or collapsed cases, where very often the patient is lost for want of this one matter of simple care and forethought. Hot bottles, hot flannels, warm drinks, a good fire, and perpetual attention to the bodily condition, are needed in such cases ; and all this extra external warmth can go on together, with the prescribed amount of ventilation from the outside. "People don't catch cold in bed," says Miss Nightingale : a truth that cannot be too strongly insisted on those who have to attend to the sick or the aged.

In the matter of cleanliness, it is enough to say that nothing can be too fastidiously clean and delicate for the proper management of a sick-room. No dirty rags left fluttering about ; no airing of damp linen or steaming towels before the sick-room fire ; no superfluous drapery anywhere, and not a rag of carpet, if possible to be

done without; no dirty pots and pans, with hideous Jacobian messes swimming on the hob; no unwashed glasses, with the lip mark left in filthy ripples at the edge, nor spoons with the oil in a clammy cloud about the bowl, or with the dregs of the draught congregated into a mahogany-coloured pool; not the smallest thing about, that could shock the keenest sense of nose or eye, and then, perhaps, you may come up to the mark of the needful amount of sick-room cleanliness. Make no noise, or as little as need be; but for the sake of suffering humanity, do not imitate Muff, and think that whispering and creeping about on tiptoes, means sick-room silence. These are almost worse than our dear elephant's mode of slapping things down with a bang, and of speaking to you from the door, as if she were hailing a man-of-war. "A firm, light, quick step, a steady, quick hand, are the desiderata; not the slow, lingering, shuffling foot, the timid, uncertain hand. Slowness is not gentleness, though it is often mistaken for such. Quickness, lightness, and gentleness, are quite compatible." A rustling nurse is an abomination; a nurse with crinoline, silk petticoats, creaking stays, or squeaking shoes, with keys that jingle in her pocket, with a chain that flaps against her steel buckle, with jingling bracelets or charms, or even with floating ribbons, is absolutely inadmissible in a sick-room, and should be gently shown the door at the earliest opportunity.

Never stand or fidget about, when the patient speaks with you, and always sit where he can see you without turning his head. Be quiet and motionless when you speak to him, and never gesticulate. Speak with an even voice, without undue emphasis, without drawl, and with no hesitation; and never speak from behind the door, or from the fireplace, or with your back turned. Never speak at all, or walk quickly towards him, while your patient is standing or moving about: "a patient in such a state is not going to the East Indies," and if you would but wait ten seconds, or walk ten yards farther, any promenade he could make would be over. Under no pretence whatever, wake him out of his sleep. "He who sleeps, dines," says the hungry Frenchman, gaily; and he who sleeps in sickness is getting all the good which food or medicine could give him. Never tell your patient of any irresolution, doubt, or change in your own mind. "People who think outside their heads," who count aloud every link in the chain of thought, have no business with the sick, for they fatigue them by their changes of imagination, quite as much as if they had carried the poor weak limbs as many yards or miles as they proposed. Leave the sick-room quickly; and come in quickly; not with a rush, not suddenly, and like a bull; but lightly and decidedly; not as if you were leaving half your mind behind you, and the other half were turning round to seek it. "Conciseness and decision in your movements are as necessary in the sick-room as absence of hurry and bustle. To possess yourself entirely will ensure you from either failing, either loiter-

ing or hurrying." Reading aloud to the sick is an exercise to be very rarely followed, and then only under strict charge, of clear, distinct, even toned, and not lengthy trials: taking care that every word is heard distinctly, that there is no mouthing, and no plunging, and that the course is short and unfatiguing.

"Variety of form and brilliancy of colour in the objects presented to patients are actual means of recovery;" wherefore, by all means gather together as much variety as possible. Hang up an engraving where the patient can see it, and change it every day, or week, or month, as may be; have a growing plant or a few cut flowers near the patient; let the light come in freely and lovingly, unless in such cases as make it painful and hurtful; and, if possible, let the bed be so placed that he can look at the view beyond, and gather into his sick soul a little of the health and vigour of the natural world. Let him have bright and cheerful subjects for thought, and win his mind as much as possible from the eternal contemplation of his own miseries, and the terrible self-consciousness which creeps over us all during illness. But this variety must be given temperately and judiciously; care must be taken not to fatigue by a too rapid change, or by the exhibition of colours or of objects, which, through some idiosyncrasy or other, exhaust and depress rather than stimulate and encourage. Again, so soon as the sick can use their hands, let them. Let them have a little needlework, a little netting, a little manual labour of some kind. The doing faculty is so large an instinct with humanity that absolute idleness soon becomes one of the most intolerable of curses.

Never let a patient see his food raw, or smell it in the process of cooking, or know anything about it until it is presented to him, warm, tempting, and at the right moment, when his appetite is most craving. Hours of appetite vary in different individuals, and it is well to study their period of recurrence in the particular case under charge. If twelve be better than two, or four than six, make the principal meal appear at the desired hour. It is mere pedantry to say that one o'clock, or twelve, or two, is to be the hour of dinner, liked or not; and that it is the wholesomest time, and that people must do what is right. People, sick people at least, will only do what they like; and what they like is generally Nature's own mode of expressing her opinion as to what they ought to do and ought to have. Do not leave uneaten food by the patient; and, unless you wish him to eat nothing at all, do not let him "always have something beside him." Be careful that everything about his meals is scrupulously clean, and that every article of food is fresh and in good condition. Be wary of jellies, except as refreshment for a parched mouth, but do not trust to them for nourishment; and with beef-tea, regard it rather as containing a "certain reparative quality, we do not know what," than as so much actual nourishment. Dr. Christison says of beef-tea, that "possibly it belongs to a new de-

nomination of remedies;" for patients can take this who reject everything else, and can maintain life on it into the bargain. Cream, in ~~many~~ long chronic cases, is irreplaceable by any other article whatever: milk stands next to it. Eggs are seldom to be admitted, excepting, perhaps, beaten up with wine; and, save in the case of scrofulous patients, who crave for them, sweets, jams, sugared drinks, or sugared tea, come under the strictest ban. Especially with fever patients, whose furred tongues and parched throats demand something sharp or pungent. Tea and coffee are both good as restoratives, but tea is the best, being the more digestible; yet neither ought to be given after five o'clock in the afternoon, as both help to keep up the excitement which causes sleepless nights. On the other hand, a cup of tea given at five or six in the morning, after one of these sleepless nights, will often tranquillise and compose the patient, and send him off into a sleep of two or three hours. Typhus patients often refuse their tea, and one of the first signs of their recovery is their asking for it again. Some attempts have been made to substitute cocoa for tea and coffee; but independently of the fact that the English sick dislike it, it has no restorative power. It is an oily starchy nut that increases fat: and does no more. "It is pure mockery of the sick to call it a substitute for tea;" and, "for any renovating stimulus it has, you might just as well offer them chesnuts instead of tea," says Miss Nightingale, scornfully. Arrowroot is an excellent vehicle for wine, but has no great nutritive power in itself; buttermilk is often of exceeding service, especially in fevers; even cheese has been found of much value, and that too under circumstances of disease which would seem specially to exclude it. But Nature sometimes plays false to all known science, and asserts her independence in the most extraordinary language.

"Feverishness is generally supposed to be a symptom of fever—in nine cases out of ten it is a symptom of bedding:" a symptom of piles of mattresses, with perhaps a feather-bed or two on the top, never unpicked, never cleansed, never changed or aired, and saturated with the moisture of the patient. Have only an iron bedstead with a thin mattress, light Witney blankets, no counterpane, no valance, no curtains. If possible, have two such beds for the very sick, who are obliged to be always in bed, and change the patient's resting-place every twelve hours. In the mean time, hang up the bed-clothes to air, and throw the bed open for the same purpose. Let the bed be low; if you make it too high the patient feels like a sandwich between floor and ceiling; and let it be even with the throat of the chimney, and that in the current of best air; also let it be small, so that a nurse can easily manage it alone. Do not place it with one side to the wall; never put a tray down on it; let it be set in the lightest part of the room, and where the patient can look out of the window; in case of bed sores, eschew

blankets underneath, for they act as poultices and retain the damp. And let there be light—sunlight purifies, renovates, strengthens; unless in certain acute, nervous, or ophthalmic cases, light is almost always craved by the sick—always and without exception by the weakly convalescent, to whom it acts as a tonic and a stimulant. If possible, have your walls painted with oil paint, which can be washed; cultivate a horror of the ordinary unglazed bedroom papers, which absorb the dirt from the air, cannot be cleansed, and are mostly held to their places by putrid paste. Abolish carpets, and have the floor perpetually swept and washed; but there is no good flooring in England. The Berlin lacquered floor is the only perfect thing of its kind; the English absorbent wood, covered with a wide woollen carpet, the worst. Never offer advice. "Chattering hopes and advices" are moral nuisances that cannot be admitted for a moment. To talk cheerfully is not to exaggerate chances of recovery, or to make light of present danger; sympathy does not mean the proffering of all sorts of wild opinions, when the medical man is in strict attendance and ^{must} know best what ought to be done—when, too, the adviser does not know all the facts of the case, nor the circumstances of the patient, and can only judge of the broken leg by looking at the bedclothes. Have immense faith in "baby." Bring in baby for a minute, or a quarter of an hour, as the case may be; and those cool lips, those little fresh unconscious hands, those sweet wondering radiant eyes, will help the poor patient more than all the stupid words of all the foolish people in the world. Baby is a blessed creature in the sick-room, and has its little mission of cheerfulness and good. And a bit of pleasant news, a bit of good fortune happening to any of your friends, is good too, and brings a little of the outside cheerfulness of life flushing like health and youth into the chamber.

The chief mental or intellectual quality in a nurse is, perhaps, the power of observation. An unobservant nurse is as great a mistake as Elephant or Muff, and the rest of the failures I have spoken of; a nurse who confounds, instead of distinguishing between, similar symptoms, is apt to lead her patient with no lagging step into the grave. But this is a knowledge which comes only by experience, actual bedside experience, coupled with superior teaching, and, therefore, the want of it should not be too severely visited. It only helps us to understand the full importance of competent nursing, and to hope, with Miss Nightingale, that this may be made a matter of scientific training and teaching, and that all professional nurses, at least, may be obliged to go through a regular system of instruction which shall qualify them for their work into something very different from Grimbones or Mrs. Gamp.

To this end, and to every other end ever so remotely connected with nurses of every grade, and with nursing of every kind, Miss Nighting-

gale's Notes will conduce more effectually than anything that has ever been written or spoken on the subject.

OUR EYE-WITNESS AT THE DOCKS.

THE subjoined report of our Eye-witness requires a word or two of explanation.

It was sent in in the usual form, was printed, and corrected for publication, when a letter arrived from our contributor couched in terms of great anxiety and alarm. He trusted it was not too late to cancel his report and substitute another which he enclosed. The first (that which he wished to be destroyed), was written on the evening of the day on which he had passed through the experience it described, and he had reason to fear that it was not so intelligible as might have been wished. He had written this unlucky paper, while suffering from a rather serious attack of indisposition—an indisposition of a very curious and alarming kind—its principal symptoms, a slight giddiness and confusion of the head, a great difficulty in the choice of terms, a singular facility of getting into sentences, an inconceivable inability to get out of them again. Nay, our unhappy contributor went so far as to say that this confusion and giddiness of head had reached so terrible a point at last, that he was unable to find the opening of his inkstand when he wanted a fresh sup of the fluid which it contained, and that his pens became blunted at the points as fast as he took them up, in consequence of their being brought in violent contact with the rim of his ink-bottle every time he made a plunge at that vessel. He added, that he was wholly unable to explain this attack. He had passed the day in visiting—with Eye-witnessing views—the London Docks with a few friends and a “tasting order;” he had returned in the evening, had written his report of their expedition and had sent it in; but, next day, remembering the severe attack of illness under which he had been suffering while he prepared his article, it had occurred to him that the paper in question must have suffered from his indisposition, and consequently he begged, as above stated, to cancel it. Our E.W. concluded his letter by saying that he has not been so curiously ill, since the night when his old friend Strongwaters was called to the Bar.

This communication arrived too late. The first report had been printed and irrevocably fixed in its present place; consequently, the only thing left to be done, was, to introduce this word of explanation before it, and to subjoin the second report, at the end of that which had been previously admitted. The first document runs thus:

Your attached servant and Eye-witness is perfectly competent to send in his report.

Who dares to say otherwise? Who dares to say that he is not in a condition to explain lucidly the present state of the Wine Trade?

Who dares to say, or rather insinuate, that your servant, going on a great and responsible mission of calm and judicious inquiry—going, in short, as your servant—could so far forget himself as to lose, even for a moment, that deep sense of duty with which let those who are not impressed with the full measure of the responsibility which attaches to the position of a public servant say is other than one calculated to tame and subdue the most mercurial and careless spirits among us, and much more that, or rather those—*those*, let us repeat, of one who at all times and in all places, conscious that his object is the improvement, the instruction, and the amusement of his fellow-men, is never more so, and rarely so much so, as at a moment such as this which he is about to describe when plunging, for the benefit of others, into the bowels of the earth, armed with a lantern, and attended by a ministering gnome provided with a gimlet, wine-glasses, spigots, and an adze (or cooper's axe), he wanders during many hours of a winter afternoon among casks, pipes, butts, and many other appurtenances of the wine trade, as connected with the export and import of that which has been styled by one whom your Eye-witness is *not* the man to disparage the enemy which—Oh! that a man should put it in his mouth to steal away his brains. Not that it *does* steal away the brains of any but those who have but a small and feeble allowance of brains to steal; for has not your Eye-witness passed the whole day in tasting and swallowing—and how should he do otherwise than swallow, it being too good to waste?—the wine which his dear friends Beeswing and Crust furnished him with access to, accompanying him themselves, one on each side, and providing him, as has been already stated, with a gnome who, furnished with a gimlet, would plunge the same into any cask, pipe, or butt, before which your servant chose to stop, and cause a beautiful stream of purple or amber-coloured liquid, as the case might be, to pour forth: which, being caught in a glass of great size and allowed to play upon it for a while in order to clean it outside and in, as the frequenters of drinking fountains cleanse the leaden stoup out of which they are going to drink (only in this case it is cleansed with precious wine and in the other with inexpensive water), and then handing the wine-glass so prepared and filled with wine of inconceivable merit, and not holding it by the stem but by the flat bottom on which it stands when it is put down, and it is impossible to put it down till you have drunk what it holds because there is nothing but round casks to put it down upon, and the wine-glass will not stand upon a round surface, for your Eye-witness tried it and broke four glasses in his attempts to steady them; but what he wishes to say is, that this man handing him incessantly these glasses full of ports, sherries, and Madeiras, which last is the favourite wine of your servant, albeit a liquor which, being but a poor man to whom the luxuries indulged in by the rich and powerful are little known, is one that he seldom tastes, and, indeed, so much the

better, for being of a gouty habit, and his great grandfather by the mother's side, whose name was Chalkstones, died of that disease, and if anybody reading these words and wishing to send a present of wine to the writer will please to make it sherry, he will greatly oblige—this man handing him, as has been said, continually glasses of these wines one after another in rapid succession has yet dispensed this which the poet whom your Eye-witness is *not* the man to disparage has called an enemy which steals away the brains of him who puts it in his mouth but which is so little so in reality that though taken into his mouth in such large quantities as hinted at above, it has yet so little stolen away his brains that he is able as your readers see to write his report as usual.

Now to begin a fresh sentence, the above being rather a long one, and to prove more completely that your Eye-witness is in a fit and proper condition for the discharge of his duty, let us go into this matter methodically, and considering the question as one of figures, let us proceed to calculate that since the whole area or surface covered by the vault called the East Vault alone, is at least eleven miles, or rather acres, and that it contains fifty thousand pipes of wine, and that in another department of the same building there are thirty-one vats, one of which, to take a specimen, contains eight thousand two hundred and sixteen gallons, and another ten thousand gallons, and supposing that five parties per day visit these vaults, and that each party consists of four persons, and that each person drinks fifty glasses of wine, and that for each glass of wine drunk there are two wasted in the cleansing of the glass outside and in with wine as before described, and in the quantity which emerges after the withdrawal of the gimlet and before the presentation of the glass, and after the removal of the glass and before the introduction of the spigot, we get a result of two hundred, or four hundred, or perhaps eight hundred glasses of wine wasted per day. And though in the figures just quoted there is a great discrepancy, and it may be asked by the reader whether it is two hundred or eight hundred glasses of wine that are wasted, it is contended that that part of the question is immaterial, the great object being to show that there is waste, and the proverb being, Waste not want not, and your servant hopes that Messrs. Firkin and Stoup, or rather Beeswing and Crust, will not want, and that your Eye-witness may ne'er want a friend or a bottle to give him—and may the present moment be the least happy—But this is wandering from our subject, which was one of statistical and numerical, and not a convivial nature, and there must be wine enough wasted here to supply an hospital, and let the authorities look to it and what a good plan it would be to catch it in receptacles placed for the purpose and if your servant was Firkin and Stoup or Beeswing and Crust, or both or either, as he is not—worse luck—but were he, he would organise some such system and taking

care not to mix the wines would bottle them and send them to deserving friends who might or might not be Eye-witnesses and who may or may not be in a low condition as to their cellars but who scorn to give hints and so then the matter drops and we come back again to a practical and calm consideration of the subject once more and a great deal of valuable information your Eye-witness would be able to give but that it unfortunately happens that he is unable for some reason or other, but he does not know what, to decipher the notes which he made at great length while in the bowels of the earth, the writing in which the said notes are recorded being indistinct and illegible which is probably attributable to his having had to hold an umbrella a lamp a pair of gloves and a wine-glass all the time that he was writing and the lamp was a tin one with dints in it placed at the end of a long stick and looking in shape like a flesh-brush, and therefore it is surely not surprising but quite the reverse that the notes of your servant should be difficult to read and that D. 41. 42. 43. should be the only one he is able to make out and he wonders what this means and if any gentleman could help him he would be much obliged and if the wine trade would please to come forward and throw some light were it but the smallest glimmer, upon this subject they would be conferring a favour, also if they would tell him (for he has forgotten) how many million miles of tramway are laid down in these vaults for the casks to roll over, they are very good things too for the visitors to the casks to roll over for they project above the level of the ground, and trip you up just as is the case with the cradles on which the casks are placed and which sticking out at unexpected corners were the cause of several accidents to your Eye-witness.

Your servant is surprised and annoyed to find, what he has never observed in connexion with any of his previous experiences, that there are curious and unaccountable blank spaces in his memory as to some portion of the time which he spent within the walls of the London Docks. It is not as if he had forgotten what took place during those periods, but rather as if they had not been. It appears to your servant that at such moments he was obliterated. He was obliterated opposite the last cask of sherry which he experimented upon. There is probably some miasma in these vaults caused by the fungoid matter overhead, or by the fumes of mingled wine and sawdust under foot, which is the reason of this obliteration. At all events it was so, the giving up of his lamp, the emerging from the vaults, the ascending of the steps which conduct to the level of the earth, all these things are obliterated. After this ascent an extremely interesting discussion took place between your Eye-witness and Messrs. Beeswing and Crust (who argued across your servant) on the derivation of the word "sack," sherry sack. It was contended that it was got from "sec" in the French; but how this was finally decided—is obliterated. Some very valuable wine statistics

were also at this time given to your Eye-witness by his two entertainers; he remembers the fact that they were communicated, that they were interesting, that they were invaluable—but they are obliterated. The number partially remains, but whether they are millions or thousands is the circumstance which is obliterated. The miasma of the East Vault is a terrible and dangerous thing, let the reader beware of it. It is pregnant with vertigo, confusion, blankness, and—in short with obliteration.

The obliterated creature found himself turning up again in the spice department, among bales of cinnamon, and arsenals of nutmegs. The reader will not expect anything on such a subject as spice. What does he care for spice? Your Eye-witness *might* enlighten him with a great deal of information upon this matter, but to what purpose? There was indeed an anecdote related in connexion with certain bales of cinnamon which were packed in some peculiar manner which your E.-W. does not remember, and which were so packed for some particular purpose which has escaped him and with a view to re-exportation to some part of the globe the name of which he is unable to recall. Your servant merely recollects that it was a very amusing story, and that it was told him by an elderly gentleman named Brackenbury or Watts, it is immaterial which but it was one of the two. He recollects all this, but owing to the effects of the atmosphere in the East Vault he remembers nothing more.

And what right has the world to expect more? Are we, the slaves of the Lamp, to be always working and never enjoying ourselves? Are we, I say—I mean the Eye-witness says, for am I not writing in the third person, and I wish I wasn't—are we to be for ever slaving and toiling? . . .

Have not all our great men been at times ready to relax over their wine? was not Sherry-dan fond of a glass? and because thou art virtuous, are there to be no more cakes and ale? . . .

And if your Eye-witness chooses for once in a way . . . it's a poor heart that never rejoices—and what's that? The printer's boy in the passage, is it? Well give him that then and tell him, tell them—tell them to mind how they print it—and—to be partic . . . careful what they are about—and to abstain from fermented liquors . . . and in short there's an end of it—and it's time to go to bed.

Such is the first report sent in by our Eye-witness. We print it without comment, feeling that the severest censure upon the report as it ought *not* to be, is furnished by the report as it ought to be, which we here subjoin.

Ever ready to take a hint, your servant acted on a hint from a friend, and appointed a day for the purpose of repairing to the London Docks, and started for the City on a vinous mission, and with a vague idea pervading his system that he was going to do something remotely connected

in some mysterious manner with the Budget and the Treaty of Commerce. Your Eye-witness began by exploring the private cellarage of Messrs. Beeswing and Crust, the gentlemen by favour of whom his tasting order was provided. To one unaccustomed to such matters, the underground resources possessed by this firm, on their own premises, were sufficiently surprising, and your servant found himself so much interested in the remains of an old convent wall belonging once to the church hard by, and also possibly in a very curious sherry to which his attention was especially solicited, that he experienced a considerable difficulty in persuading himself to leave this pleasant retreat when the moment came for proceeding to the docks. The convent wall just spoken of, now forms an integral portion of Messrs. Beeswing's wine-cellars, and, used as a prop or lean-to for pipes of tawny port to lean their drowsy heads against, is a very remarkable and interesting relic.

Before him who enters the London Docks with credentials from the firm of Beeswing and Crust, the doors of the great vaults fly open, and the servants of the Dock Company do obeisance. To him the gates of the great cellars are thrown wide, and as, when he has descended the requisite number of steps, these gates close behind him again, he feels that a Silenus-like smile is creeping over his countenance, and that his good principles are suddenly being shaken to their very centre. It is an atmosphere of conviviality. The huge professional wine-glasses, solid in the stem, vast in the bowl, but slightly contracted at the mouth, as if to keep in the liquor which unsteady hands might otherwise spill; the smell of acres of sawdust well saturated with wine itself; the aspect of the vault, with its vistas of casks extending in the darkness further than the eye can reach, and its festoons of fungoid cobweb hanging from the roof like soft and comfortable form of stalactite; the very attendant arming himself briskly with a gimlet and adze, a bundle of spigots, and a bunch of wine-glasses, held downward like a peal of bells; the long flat stick, with the tin oil-lamp at the end of it, which is handed to you, and which itself has a convivial and unprincipled look, the tin of which it is made being full of bulges like a hat which has been in a row; all these things seem in so many words to say, "You are come down here to be jolly, you have shut out the world, my boy, and all your cares along with it, and though these last are extremely affable and will kick their heels outside as long as you like to keep them, rather than not be there to greet you at your exit, you may yet give them the slip now for an hour or two, and have a frisk for once in spite of them."

As you advance and plunge deeper into the bowels of the earth, you are struck with what at this time of year you were not at all prepared for—the warmth. Shivering in the north wind outside, which crept in under his great-coat and nestled among his ribs, your Eye-witness had anticipated with shudders a chill' reception

in these vaults. Whereas, the temperature is uniformly kept at from 55° to 65° winter and summer, and is, in spite of the damp, extremely comfortable.

The party of which your Eye-witness formed one, consisted of two friends (both representatives of the distinguished firm to which allusion has already been made), and in whose guidance the E.-W. had placed himself; a man who was one of several inhabiting the vaults, and rarely appearing above the earth level—a kind of Bacchic gnome; and your poor servant and emissary, the compiler of this report. Without guidance, it would be perfectly easy to lose oneself in these vistas of barrels, which are all exactly alike; and though in the case of the East Vault these gangways are dimly lighted with oil lamps and numbered, the case numbers would only be intelligible to the men who are accustomed to them, and would afford little assistance to the uninitiated voyager.

The effects of light and shade in this great crypt of the Temple of Silenus are often very fine. Sometimes you see a peep of daylight stealing through some cranny from above, and sometimes, as you look down one of the side alleys which diverge from the main thoroughfares, you get a glimpse of other groups similar to that of which you form a part, who are probably similarly employed, and who, in the distance, and dimly lighted by their feeble lamps, look like a kind of convivial Guy Fawkeses. Occasionally, too, you meet with a party of the Bacchic gnomes before alluded to, wandering about on some mission the object of which does not appear; perhaps it might be remotely connected with exploits of the kind recently made public in our law courts? The facilities for such transformations as have lately been disclosed, appear to an uninitiated visitor to be very great, and the system of supervision on a singularly slender scale.

But by far the most remarkable thing in connexion with these vaults is the extraordinary growth—spoken of above—of a certain fungoid substance which hangs in the strangest forms and in immense masses from the roof. The men who live in this place seem to be rather proud of this fungus—it is never interfered with, and they point out any larger mass than usual, with some complacency. It begins in an incrustation perfectly white and resembling cotton wool, which forms on the brickwork of the vault, and as it grows descends in irregular forms, hanging down a foot or two in length. Sometimes, also, one of these masses is continued, and either by joining itself to another, or being taken up again to the roof, forms itself into a garland, or festoon. These growths have invariably, by the time they have attained any length, lost their brilliant whiteness, and, being turned to a dingy dirt colour, are wholly without beauty. However large these masses of fungus are, they are always entirely soft and light, so that if you blow at one of them, or fan it with your hat, it will sway and waver in the air like gossamer.

Viewed carelessly and by the extremely dim light, the ceiling of these vaults presents a patchy and bulbous look, which carries out the convivial aspect of the place, and suggests that the vaults themselves have taken to drinking, and have got blotchy and bepimpled in consequence. It is a curious circumstance in connexion with this incrustation, that it never grows in any cellar but one devoted to wine.

Passing down the avenues of casks, all of which are ornamented with numerous hieroglyphics, indicating the names of their proprietors, the date of vintage of the wine inside, the period of its arrival at the docks, and the name of the ship in which it made its voyage—passing down these thoroughfares, one after another, your Eye-witness is presently arrested by his companions before a cask on whose head the letters B. and C., and the figures 8—4—51, are inscribed.

“Let us try this,” says Mr. Beeswing.

“It is ‘50 Port,” adds Mr. Crust.

Your Eye-witness has heard of ‘50 Port, and is anxious to taste it. He looks on in admiration while the gnome who is in attendance performs the following manœuvres, all executed very smartly, and perhaps with a trifle of ostentation. First, he places his lamp upon the ground, then he selects one of the wine-glasses from the “peal” before described, then he looks at the point of his gimlet, then he politely requests the E.-W. to stand on one side, and then he flies at the cask. The gimlet is into it and out again in no time, and the jet of wine, which your servant was told to stand aside that he might avoid, bursts out in a purple arch which has its origin at the gimlet-hole and its termination in the sawdust. Into this beautiful *wine-bow* the gnome now plunges the glass which he has selected. The invaluable liquor plays upon it outside and in, and the vessel is thoroughly rinsed and cleaned with wine. Then, and not till then, the glass is allowed to fill, and the gnome having handed it to your Eye-witness, holding it by the pedestal on which it stands, and never by the stem, proceeds to fill other glasses for Messrs. Beeswing and Crust, and finally choosing (he is in no hurry) a spigot from those in his hand, presses it into the hole, and to the great relief of your servant the stream of wine which has been flowing all this time is at last dammed up.

Your Eye-witness does at Rome what the Romans do, so when the glass of wine is handed to him held by its pedestal, it is the pedestal that he takes it by, and is just putting it to his lips, when he is suddenly checked—

“Stop!” cries Mr. Beeswing, who has been holding his wine with the lamp close behind it.

“Don’t drink it!” vociferates Mr. Crust, who has been subjecting his liquor to a similar test.

And before your servant knows what has happened, his glass is taken from him, politely but firmly, and its contents are poured upon the sawdust.

"A little thick," says Mr. Beeswing, mysteriously.

"Decidedly cloudy," adds Mr. Crust. "Try that one," he adds to the gnome, pointing to a cask close by, whose hieroglyphics are precisely similar to those upon the barrel which has just been experimented upon. "Try that one," says Mr. Crust.

"That one" is tried, by the same process which was employed in the case just described, and the wine being pronounced by Messrs. Beeswing and Crust, unanimously, to be in perfect order, your Eye-witness is permitted to become a mouth-witness of its quality, and, on removing the glass empty from his lips, is gently reprimanded by his entertainers for the irreverent haste with which he has swallowed his liquor, and is initiated by them in the real art of drinking a glass of wine.

Let no man suppose that he knows how to drink a glass of wine till he has passed through a curriculum of dock studies, and has matriculated in the East Vault. There are doubtless those who would tell you that drinking a glass of wine is one of the simplest things conceivable. These misguided persons imagine that all you have to do is to take hold of the glass, convey it promptly to your lips, and drain the contents. Heaven help the innocence of those who imagine this to be all! Let us hasten the work of their enlightenment. He who designs to take his glass of wine in the manner of an amateur or judge, must go to work in a way very different from the flippantly brisk treatment of the subject hinted at just above. He must beware also of any theatrical tendencies in this matter. This is none of your pasteboard flagon affairs. There is no waving of wine-cups above your head, nor subsequent drinking so rapid as to carry out the hideous idea suggested by the waving process, that the flagon itself is empty. The following grave course of proceeding is to be closely attended to. First of all, it is necessary that the wine-taster should look to the attitude of his whole body, which is to be done in this wise. He is to stand with his weight equally divided on both legs, and with his feet close together. He is then to lean his body slightly forward, in the manner of a gentleman who is eating a juicy peach, and who has a regard for the breast of his coat. Next, he is to square his elbows and to take hold of the wine-glass, not by the stem, but, as has been already mentioned, by the pedestal, holding it somewhat loosely between the forefinger and thumb. These things done, he is next to attend to the expression of his countenance, which is to be that of a gentleman of a suspicious nature, and incapable of being taken in. Let us now recommend our wine-taster to apply the light test, and to hold his glass up to lamp or window, as the case may be, in order that he may get a notion of its transparency. Having done this, the monosyllable, *Hum!* may be softly and slowly allowed to pass from the amateur's lips. It is a good phrase, and unless he frowns, which it is not at present desirable that he should,

unless the wine is obviously thick, he commits himself to nothing. The eye test having now been applied, we should next recommend a recourse to the organ of smell, and here (there is no doubt of it) a slight frown may under any circumstances be judiciously allowed to distort the features. At this point, too, he is to put his head a little on one side, to put his nose very near the mouth of his glass, and to sniff sharply and irritably two or three times. Let it be owned that we are working our amateur a little hard, yet this is nothing to what is before him when he once gets the wine to his lips. It is then—it is at the moment of raising his wine-glass to his mouth—that the taster is to commence a system of harassment with regard to the owner of the wine which is to know no limit, and which no humane or friendly considerations are to be allowed to mitigate. Retaining the slight frown used in the nose test, our amateur is now recommended to "fix" his entertainer with a pitiless glare—not, however, turning his face towards him, but, on the contrary, getting it a little away from his victim, and regarding him (even if he be his dearest friend) suspiciously out of the corner of his eye. There will be no harm at this stage in the proceedings, in making two or three "offers" at the wine before sipping it. This is, on the contrary, a course much to be recommended, as it suggests that really your mouth is too serious a property to be treated lightly, and that you must think twice before calling its attention to a wine that *may* be a failure.

At the tremendous moment when the first sip of wine actually passes our amateur's lips, he must, on peril of losing the whole of the prestige he has gained by a careful attention to all that has gone before, withdraw the glass smartly from his mouth and look down at it as if it had offended him. Then, his glance having gained new strength by this relaxation, must be brought swiftly back to his entertainer's countenance, and a look of malignant penetration must be screwed out of it that shall find its way into that sufferer's inmost vitals. The mouth must now be stretched as nearly as possible across the face, the lips being compressed to a degree that renders them invisible and tightly closed. They remain thus, only for a moment, and are almost instantaneously pushed out till they are on a level with the tip of the nose. The lips retained still in this position are next to be moved slowly from side to side, and occasionally by a use of the muscle called "orbicularis oris," are to be made to revolve, which it will be found adds great effect to the air of dark mistrust hitherto expressed only by the eyes. The whole of these exercises having been got through, and repeated several times, the wine may at last—if the taster cannot resist it—be swallowed; but it will be more effective if he rejects it after all, and spits it out upon the ground.

The man who can enact the whole of this performance correctly, and can be guaranteed against a smile throughout—this man, and

this man only, can be really said to know how to drink a glass of wine. Let us return to the vats.

The '50 Port having been satisfactorily disposed of, the little party of which your Eye-witness was one, moved on to other parts of the vaults, and passed to a consideration of those fine dry sherries and rich Madeiras in which the inhabitants of our island especially revel—when they can get them. At every stoppage for tasting purposes, precisely the same ceremonial gone through in connexion with the '50 Port, took place—with the exception of the throwing away the contents of the glasses—over and over again. Your Eye-witness, however, was prudence itself, and knowing that he had duties to attend to after leaving the docks, confined himself to one glass of Madeira (now raging in his left great-toe) and another of a very curious Amontillado called the Queen of Spain: a wine calculated to reconcile one to that monarch in a remarkable degree. Between all these sips, a certain paper of biscuits, brought for the purpose, was resorted to, to keep the mouth in tasting order, and to prevent the fumes of the wine from rising to the head. It was perfectly successful in both these respects—especially the last. How delightful is tem-perance!

The recent cases which have been brought before the public notice, in which it has been tolerably evident that the wines left in the vaults at the London Docks have been tampered with, may have caused some of your readers to ask how it is that the different wine-merchants in London do not keep their stock in some warehouse of their own, and under their own super-vision, in which case such frauds would be im-possible? The answer to this question is simple enough. The wine has to be kept for years after its arrival in this country, before it is required; therefore, if the merchant were to pay the duty, which he must if he wants to take his wine away, he would be, during all these years, losing the interest of his money. While the wine remains at the docks, it pays no duty, conse-quently, during all the time that it lies there going through its maturing process, the pos-sessor of it is able to keep his money, and make use of it. Private bonded warehouses, where the wine would be exempt from duty, are only allowed within four hundred yards from the river. The shipping expenses connected with them are very heavy. There are few mer-chants whose stock would be enough to fill one, and of course if two or three took one of them together, they would be liable to robbery from each other's servants. There is little doubt but that hereafter, when the duty is reduced to one shilling or eighteenpence per gallon, instead of five and ninepence, the merchants will keep larger stocks of duty-paid wine than they do at present, as the loss of the interest of the money then would be inconsiderable in proportion to the dock charges. These last are very high, sixpence per week being required for every pipe of wine that lies in the vaults. Some notion

may be formed of what these dock charges amount to, in the course of the year, when it is mentioned that the firm of Beeswing and Crust, to whom the Eye-witness owes his infor-mation, pays to the different dock companies a sum varying from 12,000*l.* to 14,000*l.* per annum.

It is a startling thing, and gives one some notion of what commerce is in this country, to visit such places as the London Docks, and see the scale of everything around one. The entire space enclosed within the domains of the company is no less than 91 acres. Of this the water area alone is 34*1*/*2* acres, while the quay room, alongside which vessels may lie, occupies 11,115 feet. The contents of the different ware-houses and sheds amount to 230,000 tons, and there is vault accommodation for wines and spirits capable of holding 87,000 pipes. It re-mains to give the reader some notion of the wealth contained in the different warehouses and vaults; this may be done, not to frighten the reader with figures, in but one or two quo-tations. The estimated value of goods of various kinds landed in the London Docks in one year (1850) was thirteen million and a half of sover-aigns. The worth of the wines and spirits landed in that year alone was close upon three million; the rest was made up by the value of the tobacco, sugar, tea, coffee, and other goods which entered the docks. Now let us see what government gets out of all this. On those wines and spirits, the estimated value of which has just been given, a duty was at that time exacted amounting to 4,253,977*l.*, which is only nearly twice the worth of the goods them-selves, while on the whole contents of the docks the excise reached the enormous sum of 13,727,390*l.* And this, let the reader re-member, was the amount of revenue gained from only one of the numerous docks at which excisable goods brought to this country are landed.

The space occupied by the London Docks seems larger than is required. Your Eye-witness was struck with this, both in the vaults dedicated to wine and, subsequently, in the warerooms devoted to tobacco. The men be-longing to this latter department when ques-tioned what had become of the stores which used to lie there, replied that they were "down at the Vic," and, indeed, there is no reason to doubt that the New Victoria Docks, for which the abbreviation just quoted is the slang name, must have done considerable injury to the Old Docks. It is not impossible, as has been already hinted, that a reduction of the duty on wines will hurt them still more, and that they may suffer by many of the results of that system of substituting direct for indirect taxation which seems to find favour in the eyes of our modern financialists. In every great change somebody goes to the wall, and what is play to one set of people is death to others.

There is a good deal of waste, as it seems to the observer from outside, in the different de-partments of the docks. Not only is there a

waste of wine which surely might be easily avoided, and which must amount in the course of the year to hundreds of bottles, but in the tobacco region the same want of economy is remarkable. The amount of liquor saved in the course of the year in a London gin palace by the contrivance there adopted for collecting the *drippings of the glasses* has often been quoted. Were a similar carefulness to make the most of everything, observed in these London Docks, some startling results would doubtless be obtained. The institution called the "Queen's tobacco-pipe" was out of order when your Eye-witness paid his visit to the tobacco region of the docks, but he was told concerning it that it was a great kiln into which the damaged tobacco was thrown to be destroyed by burning. It would be well if our consumers of cheap cigars never got any worse tobacco than this which is burnt up, and it would be well if our poor friends who buy an ounce of tea at a time never took away in their screw of paper a worse article than that which, condemned as "damaged," is sent out in lighters to the mouth of the river and pitched into the sea.

Your Eye-witness in his visit to the docks confined himself to the wine-vaults and the tobacco and spice departments. Concerning the first of these—a legitimate prey to excise—it may be observed that the difference between the value of the thing itself, and the sum charged as duty, is even more remarkable than in the case of the wine and spirit tax. On the \$89,780⁷ worth of tobacco imported at the London Docks in the year 1850, no less a sum was exacted than \$935,812⁷, before the fumes of this popular drug were allowed to arrive at the nostrils of the public.

There are many things connected with the commercial world, which strike the non-commercial world with astonishment. There are few persons who, entering the spice depot of the London Docks, would fail to be surprised at the amount of cinnamon and nutmegs imported at this single place of debarkation. Heaven help us! one would suppose one bale of cinnamon enough for the whole of England for ever. There are eight thousand imported here annually. Of these, however, about seven thousand five hundred are re-exported again, and principally to Spain. The Spaniards make an enormous use of cinnamon in the manufacture of chocolate; and as they are—like other foreign nations—extremely averse to parting with money, they prefer coming to this country for their cinnamon, to importing it themselves from Ceylon: the reason being that in the latter case they would have to pay for it in coin, while here they get it in exchange for wines and fruits, and other Spanish produce.

After wandering for some time among the cinnamon groves, the attention of your Eye-witness was attracted to certain bales, differently

packed from the rest, and of larger and more cumbersome proportions. On asking the superintendent of the department—a very intelligent and humorous old gentleman—what was the destination of these bales, and why they were packed differently from the others, your Eye-witness was put in possession of the following particulars, to which he begs to call the attention of those foreign authorities whom the matter concerns:

"These, sir," said the superintendent, pointing to the packages in question, "these are some bales of cinnamon done up ready to be shipped for Pernambuco or Mexico; and you wouldn't believe, unless you was to see it, how those bales are packed. The South Americans, who are under a very heavy duty on imported cinnamon, send over to us in a private way an order for a certain number of bales, each of which is to be rolled up, first of all in a blanket, then in two tarpaulins, and then in matting over all. Well, sir, I obey the order, and it isn't for me to inquire *why* the cinnamon is to be so packed. I know, certainly, that in the course of the voyage, with the heat and one thing and another, those tarpaulins get fused into a kind of solid waterproof case round the cinnamon; but it isn't for me to suppose that when the ship gets near land, these bales are chucked overboard, and that then the Pernambucans, or Mexicans, or whoever they may be, go out quietly in boats and pick them up. It isn't for me to think that the bales are carefully packed, and that the tarpaulins are clapped on over all, in order that the cinnamon ~~mayn't~~ be spoiled when the packages are thrown into the sea. Blankets are very much wanted over there, and so, maybe, is tarpaulin. I only do as I'm bid, and if they sent word over, that the cinnamon was to be wrapped up in ladies' ball dresses—and if they paid their money—why, I should obey 'em, sir."

There is, surely, all over the world an innate sympathy with smuggling. Even the gentleman whose half-notes the Chancellor of the Exchequer is always acknowledging in the Times, would, doubtless, on his return from the Rhine, use every trick in his power to hide his eau-de-Cologne from the Custom-house officers.

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